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THE EGYPTIAN NOVEL

THE EGYPTIAN NOVEL AND ITS MAIN TRENDS

FROM 1913 TO 1952

BY

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THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO PRESS
CAIRO, U. A. R.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number:
73 : 149126

PRINTED IN THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC
BY DAR AL-MAAREF, CAIRO

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PREFACE

This work was a thesis approved for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Cambridge in 1965; since then, however, I have revised the text and made a number of alterations and corrections.

In this study I have attempted to examine the novels most representative of the main trends of the Egyptian novel between 1913 and 1952. The novels written during this period can be grouped into three main trends : the romantic, the historical and the realistic. This classification does not of course mean that each trend was completely isolated from the others; in many historical works, for instance, there are romantic elements, and in some realistic novels the historical aspects are important. Nevertheless, the basis for such a division is there, and I have therefore divided my study into three sections, each section dealing with one of these trends I have also included some works which did not play a very significant role in the development of a trend, but which attracted the attention of the critics and the reading public, even if undeservedly.

1913 has been chosen as the starting point of the study since it was the year in which Haikal's *Zainab* was first published.[1] This work, in my opinion, is the first Egyptian novel which can be judged according to the accepted criteria of the art of novel writing; no earlier work could be counted a novel in the strict sense of the word. The revolution of 1952 was a convenient point at which to conclude the study, not so much because it marks any sudden break in the development of the novel, but because it brought about political, cultural and social changes which have gradually affected the literary scene as a whole.

The following two works were particularly useful in helping me to determine which novels published between 1913 and 1952 were significant enough to be included in my study : Maḥmūd Shaukat's *al-Fann al-Qaṣaṣī fi 'l-Adab al-'Arabī al-Ḥadīth*, and 'Abd al-Muḥsin Badr's *Taṭawwur al-Riwāya al-'Arabiya al-Ḥadītha fi Miṣr* (1870-1938). Dr. Shaukat's work is an outline of the development of the Egyptian novel and short story over a considerable period — from the 19th century up to 1956 — and does not give a detailed study of the novel either from

(1) For a discussion of the date of the first publication of *Zainab*, see below p. 12.

the artistic or from the historical point of view. However, both this work and that of Dr. Badr provided me with much factual information about novels and their publication during the period covered by this study. I also consulted Prof. H.A.R. Gibb's *Studies in Contemporary Arabic Literature*, published in his *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, and Egyptian periodicals such as *al-Risāla*, *al-Thaqāfa*, *al-Kitāb*, and *al-Kātib al-Miṣri*, in which every novel of any importance was reviewed.

Many of the novels discussed may not be familiar to Western readers, and therefore I have given summaries of them where necessary in order to be able to comment on them intelligibly.

I have preferred not to write about the theoretical aspect of the novel in general, or to discuss the criteria which should be applied in the examination of a novel. Since every work of art has its own individual characteristics, I found it better to discuss each important novel separately and to emphasize its particular faults or qualities, instead of committing myself to certain criteria which might apply to one work and not to others. As for the basic elements which make up any novel, i.e. characterization, plot, style, etc., studies of these are commonplace and further discussion would be a mere repetition of what others have said. However, the bibliography contains the titles of various works which are devoted to such studies.

The social, political, and cultural background which led to the emergence of the Egyptian novel has been treated briefly in the introduction, and events which have no evident bearing on the subject are omitted. However where necessary points of importance are mentioned in the discussion of the novel concerned.

Finally I should like to express my gratitude to Dr J.F.P. Hopkins for his guidance and his extreme kindness to me. My thanks are due also to Dr. J.A. Williams, to my wife Dr. Elizabeth Sakkūt, and to the Staff of Cambridge University Library, especially Miss J. Thompson of the Oriental Department. I am very grateful to the Egyptian writers, especially Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī, Maḥmūd Taimūr and Yūsuf al-Sibā'ī, who made their works available to me and gave me much valuable information, and to the University of Cairo, who by its generous financial aid made it possible for me to carry out this study.

Ḥamdī Sakkūt

INTRODUCTION

In order to throw light on the development of the novel, I shall give here an outline of the factors in the literary renaissance in Egypt.

The principal cause of reawakening after centuries of stagnation was the impact of Western culture on traditional Egyptian society. The French Expedition to Egypt in 1798 marks the beginning of this reawakening. The orderly administration, the printing press the French brought with them, the Institut d'Égypte, and the work of the French scholars meant little to the majority of Egyptians, but some of the ulema such as 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Jabartī and Shaikh Ḥasan al-'Attār[1] were impressed by the evidence of progress they saw, and the desire to learn more was aroused.

After the French left, Muhammad 'Alī established himself as ruler (1805) No less impressed by the power of Europe, he began the modernization of Egypt, seeing in the adaptation of Western methods a means of strengthening his own position. He wished to create a modern army and navy, and for this purpose founded a number of schools, not only for military science but also for medicine, veterinary science, pharmacy, engineering and agriculture.[2] At first the teachers in these schools were mainly Italians, later the French gained preponderance.[3] As a further step in training officers, doctors, engineers etc , and also to train teachers for the new schools and translators of technical works, educational missions were sent abroad; the first was to Italy in 1809 [4] though later missions went mostly to France.

Although mission members were sent to study technical and

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(1) 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Āthār fī 'l-Tarājim wa 'l-Akhbār*, vol. 3, pp. 35-7. See also Jamāl al-dīn al-Shayyāl, *Tārīkh al-Tarjama fī Miṣr fī 'Ahd al-Hamla al-Faransīya*, pp 19-32

(2) For details see Ahmad 'Izzat 'Abd al-Karīm, *Tārīkh al-Ta'līm fī 'Aṣr Muhammad 'Alī*, pp 251-421; Shayyāl, *Tārīkh al-Tarjama wa 'l-Haraka al-Thaqāfīya fī 'Aṣr Muhammad 'Alī*, pp. 16-32.

(3) Shayyāl, *Tārīkh al-Tarjama fī 'Aṣr Muhammad 'Alī*, pp 12-14

(4) *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 95-6.

scientific subjects, their role in the development of Arabic literature was of great importance. They were exposed to direct European influences: they read French literature, absorbed French ideas, and were living in a society very different from their own.

Mission members when they returned to Egypt were set to translating technical works. In 1835 a School of Languages was opened and to it was attached a translation office.(1) Many works on different subjects were translated into Arabic, however all were on military or technical subjects except for one literary work—and that was a translation of Sa'dī's *Gulistān* from Persian.(2) Muḥammad 'Alī founded a press (1821) to print the translations,(3) and also an official newspaper, *al-Waqā'i' al-Miṣrīya* (1828).

Primary and preparatory education was not neglected and government schools were founded on European lines.(4) Another source of European influence at this time and later was the Missionary Schools. The middle of the 19th century saw the foundation of the first European and American schools. These schools however were unsatisfactory in some respects: "The mission schools, whether consciously or not, brought their pupils near the religion of their teachers; there were instances known of Muslim children being turned into Christians, and even when this did not happen the student who studied a foreign curriculum in a foreign language might become mentally dependent on a foreign nation and estranged from his own."(5)

For this reason, students of these schools contributed little to the development of their national literature. Nevertheless, these schools together with the government schools and the educational missions helped to create a reading public and a new class of educated men. Many of this new class were acquainted with one or more European languages and influenced by Western ideas, and desired to strive for the reform of Egypt.

Representative of this class was Rifā'a al-Ṭahṭāwī, who spent five years in France on an educational mission, during which he read

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(1) See Shayyāl, *Tārīkh al-Tarjama . fī 'Aṣr Muḥammad 'Alī*, pp 38-44

(2) *Ibid.*, appendices I and II

(3) *Ibid.*, pp. 195-6.

(4) See 'Abd al-Karīm, *Tārīkh al-Ta'līm*, book 3, pp 147-248

(5) Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 1798-1939, pp. 137-8.

widely and was influenced by the ideas of the French Enlightenment.[1] After his return he became director of the School of Languages and later head of the Translation Office.[2] He himself translated a number of works, including Fénélon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque.* During Ismā'īl's reign, he became editor of the educational review *Rauḍat al-Madāris*, and encouraged the government press at Būlāq to publish classical Arabic works.[3] He wrote several works, including *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Bāriz,* a description of his stay in Paris, and *Manāhij al-Albāb al-Miṣriya fī Mabāhij al-Ādāb al-'Aṣriya* in which he discussed Egypt's past and suggested methods by which Egypt should seek progress in the future. He emphasized the need for modern education for the ulema and political education for all citizens, and wanted primary education for all, girls as much as boys.[4] In order to express such new ideas, it was necessary to modernize the classical Arabic language and to expand its vocabulary. As Jamal Ahmed states, "The three trends which stemmed from Rifā'a's work in general, and from this book (*al-Manāhij*) in particular, were to become the bases of the new intellectual movement in Egypt the modernization of the Arabic language, the idea of nationalism, and a new romantic conception of Egypt."[5]

Most of Muhammad 'Alī's new institutions did not survive the reigns of his successors 'Abbās and Sa'īd, who were opposed to European education and western ways. Ismā'īl however, himself a mission member, was sympathetic towards the West, even going so far as to declare that Egypt was part of Europe. Schools were founded, and the educational missions, which had been stopped under 'Abbās and Sa'īd, were resumed. Modern libraries were founded, the most important being the National Library, Dār al-Kutub (1870). 'Alī Mubārak says in *al-Khiṭaṭ al-Taufīqiya*: "It seemed to me that I should found in Egypt a Khedivial Library which would resemble the Library of Paris; I asked the Khedive Ismā'īl's permission for this and

(1) Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p 69.
(2) Shayyāl, *Tārīkh al-Tarjama . fī 'Aṣr Muhammad 'Alī*, p. 138.
(3) Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 72
(4) *Ibid.*, p. 76-7.
(5) Jamal Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism*, p. 14.

he gave it, so I began to build the Khedivial Library."[1] The establishment of libraries enabled books to be preserved and classified in an up-to-date way, and thus encouraged the public to read. In addition to this, Dār al-Kutub and some of the learned societies founded at this time were undertaking the tasks of reviving old works and editing manuscripts. For instance, *Jam'iyat al-Ma'ārif* founded in 1868 and headed by a former mission member, Muhammad Pasha 'Ārif, published such works as *al-Bayān wa 'l-Tabyīn* by Jāhiẓ, *Rasā'il Badī' al-Zamān* and *Dīwān Ibn al-Mu'tazz*.[2]

In this favourable atmosphere the new intellectual movement flourished. Because of the comparative freedom enjoyed by Egypt during Ismā'īl's reign, a number of Syrian writers fled from the Turkish censorship in their own country and settled in Egypt. These immigrants played an important part in the intellectual life of Egypt, particularly as the real founders of the popular press in the 1870s The daily newspaper *al-Ahrām* for instance, still flourishing today, was founded in 1875 by Salīm and Bishāra Taqlā. The press facilitated the publication of articles on social and political subjects by new intellectuals concerned with reform, and encouraged the development of a simpler, more direct style of Arabic prose. About Adīb Ishāq, a Syrian noted for the elegance of his style, Jamal Ahmed points out: "When he started his own paper *Miṣr*, he declared that he would aim first at 'polishing the language', secondly at instilling moderation into political polemics, and thirdly at diffusing scientific knowledge and raising moral standards."[3]

Ismā'īl's reign, during which the Opera House and other smaller theatres were opened, also marks the beginning of the Egyptian theatre Although some foreign troups, particularly Italians, had played in Egypt before,[4] the development of the theatre in Egypt was due largely to the work of Syrian immigrants, for instance the playwrights Salīm al-Naqqāsh, and Adīb Ishāq, mentioned above, and the actor Yūsuf al-Khayyāṭ, who performed plays most of which

(1) Mubārak, *Khiṭaṭ*, vol. 3, p 14.
(2) 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Rāfi'ī, *'Aṣr Ismā'īl*, vol 1, pp 242-3.
(3) Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, p. 18
(4) Jacob Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, pp 52-5.

were adapted or translated from French ones. An Egyptian Jew, Ya'qūb Ṣanū' also did much to popularize the Arab theatre in Egypt, and wrote thirty-two plays and puppet shows, some inspired by Italian dramatists and by Molière. While previous plays had been acted in classical Arabic, he simplified his language to suit the colloquial Arabic his audience would understand.(1)

Although previously translators had limited themselves mainly to military and technical works, during this period also translation from European literary works began. As the educational missions were directed mostly to France, many French teachers taught in the schools, and French was the first foreign language taught at all levels. Thus it was natural that the translators turned first to French literature. Muhammad Yūsuf Najm lists about seventy French novels and short stories as examples of translated works which were published in Egypt in the period from 1870 till 1914.(2) Latīfa al-Zayyāt mentions that during the reign of Ismā'īl (1863-1879) one single book was translated from English, and it was a school book written by an English teacher.(3) As Dr. Zayyāt observes, this attitude towards French culture, and consequently towards translation from French literature of all kinds, remained evident throughout the period 1882-1925, and even after.

Even poetry, the traditional form of literary expression, had new life breathed into it by Mahmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī (1839-1904), who abandoned the lifeless and artificial style used by most poets of that time, and wrote of contemporary events, taking the style of the poets of the Jāhilīya and of the 'Abbāsid period as his model.

The question of the influence of the thought of Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī on the educated classes in Egypt may be noted here. Afghānī was in Cairo in 1869 and from 1871 till 1879 when he was deported. He gathered among his disciples such men as Muhammad 'Abduh and Sa'd Zaghlūl, to whom he taught the necessity of strengthening the Islamic community so that it could resist the growing power of Europe.(4)

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(1) Landau, *Studies*, pp. 63-67.

(2) Najm, *al-Qissa fī 'l-Adab al-'Arabī al-Hadīth*, 1870-1914, pp 13-21

(3) Zayyāt, *Harakat al-Tarjama al-Adabīya*, pp. 8-9.

(4) See Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 109

The work of Afghānī's pupil Muhammad 'Abduh was to have a far greater influence on Egyptian intellectual life, however. 'Abduh taught at al-Azhar and Dār al-'Ulūm, edited for a time the official newspaper *al-Waqā'i' al-Miṣriya*, and wrote articles on social and political subjects and on education. He declared that one of his aims was to reform the Arabic language.(1) After the failure of the 'Urābī revolution, 'Abduh spent six years in exile. When he returned to Egypt, he became a judge and later Chief Mufti of Egypt. He worked to reform the religious courts and to reinterpret Islamic Law in the light of the needs of modern life. In this he was opposed by conservative opinion. He equally saw the necessity of improving the educational system: the traditional education in religious schools and al-Azhar was not adequate for modern life, and the mission and new state schools tended to estrange students from their native culture and religion.(2) To quote from Professor Gibb " . . he bridged, at least temporarily, the widening gap between the traditional learning and the new rationalism introduced from the West, and made it possible for the Muslim graduate of the Western universities to prosecute his studies without being conscious of a fear, or incurring the reproach, that he had abjured his faith. With the removal of this inhibition, Muslim Egypt seemed to win a new release of energy."(3)

Ismā'īl's financial difficulties led to increasing European intervention, and the uprising led by Ahmad 'Urābī Pasha ended in the British Occupation (1882). Under the British, little concern was shown for education, for various reasons. Many schools therefore were opened by private societies.(4) An important step forward was the foundation of the National University *(al-Jāmi'a al-Ahliya)* in 1908. "The creation of the university was a deliberate attempt to fill the gaps in the official system of education . . The general public contributed to the funds of the proposed university with enthusiasm, and many prominent men gave devoted services to the scheme."(5)

The gradually increasing educated class, influenced by Western

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(1) Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p 141
(2) *Ibid*, pp 137-8.
(3) Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, p. 255.
(4) Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, p 30
(5) *Ibid*, p. 56.

thought and faced with the fact of foreign rule, was becoming politically conscious, and the desire for political and social reform grew. One of the Muhammad 'Abduh's disciples, Aḥmad Fatḥī Zaghlūl, translated some European historical and political works which had a great influence, and himself emphasized the need for education and self-improvement.(1) Another of 'Abduh's followers, Qāsim Amīn, published in 1899 his controversial work *Taḥrir al-Mar'a*, in which he condemned the degraded position of women in Muslim countries and advocated education for women and recognition of their rights. In 1900, he published a second work, *al-Mar'a al-Jadida*, on the same subject.

1907 saw the creation of three important political parties: *Ḥizb al-Iṣlāh al-Dustūrī* (the Constitutional Reform Party), led by 'Alī Yūsuf supporting the Khedive, and *al-Hizb al-Watanī* (the Nationalist Party), led by Muṣṭafā Kāmil, both desired Egypt's independence but emphasized the unity of the Muslim community and wished to maintain Egypt's connection with the Ottoman Empire. *Ḥizb al-Umma*, the People's Party, which consisted largely of followers of Muhammad 'Abduh, favoured a more secular nationalism, believing that loyalty was due first and foremost to the Egyptian nation, not to the Islamic community as a whole.(2) According to Jamal Ahmed "During the preceding years five factors above all had contributed to bring about this ferment (of political ideas) the growth of panislamic feeling, the Dinshawai incident, the economic and security crisis, the Russo-Japanese war, and the growing opposition to foreigners."(3)

Associated with the emergence of political parties was an increase in the number of newspapers, which were founded principally to express political ideas. 'Ali Yūsuf founded *al-Mu'ayyad* in 1889, and Mustafā Kāmil *al-Liwā'* in 1900. The newspaper of the People's Party, *al-Jarida*, was founded in 1907 with Ahmad Lutfī al-Sayyid as its editor.(4) Luṭfī al-Sayyid was well-known for his objectivity and integrity; he translated Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and in 1925

(1) Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, pp. 44-6.
(2) Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p 170.
(3) Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, pp 58-9.
(4) Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 200, Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, p 69

became chancellor of the University—it was he who opened its doors to women.

The struggle between these parties encouraged the development of oratory and essay writing; not only did the style used become more logical but also the subject matter was enriched by the opinions of Rousseau, Darwin, J. Stuart Mill and many others.

Other periodicals such as *al-Muqtataf* (1876) and *al-Hilāl* (1892), both founded by Lebanese who had emigrated to Egypt, avoided questions of local politics and published articles on science, sociology, history and classical Arabic literature, aiming to present western scientific thought to the reading public and make them aware of their own cultural heritage [1]

A growing number of periodicals devoted space to the printing of literary works poems, and novels and short stories which were mainly translated. The translation of European literary works, mostly French as mentioned above, increased throughout this period. Although a small part of the works translated were literary masterpieces, such as the *Iliad*, translated by Sulaimān al-Bustānī in 1904, by far the larger proportion were works of little literary value. L. Cheikho states that 90% of the works published were translated from useless immoral novels dominated by love.[2] According to Latīfa al-Zayyāt however, the subject matter of what was translated at that time included not only love stories but also oriental tales, historical, picaresque and detective novels.[3] Love, especially at the beginning of this period had to be "pure and platonic in which only souls and not bodies meet,"[4] and social novels must include moral teaching.

These early translators for the most part were not faithful to the original text, they distorted it and sometimes even attributed it to themselves The distortion of the original took various forms titles were usually altered and written in rhymed prose which was the fashion, pages or even chapters were omitted, misinterpretations of the original

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(1) Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins*, pp 32-3, Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, pp 246-7.

(2) Louis Cheikho, *Tārīkh al-Ādāb al-'Arabīya fī 'l-Rubu' al-Awwal min al-Qarn al 'Ishrīn*, p 92.

(3) Zayyāt, *Harakat al-Tarjama*, pp. 80-120.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 88

were common, interpolations of Arabic verses and sayings as well as comments by the translator were not unusual. The greater part of what was translated during this period bore neither the name of the author of the original work nor even sometimes the language in which the original had been written.[1]

The principal reasons for the choice of works of little literary value for translation, and for the carelessness with which the translation was done, were probably the influence of the taste of the uneducated reader, and an insufficient knowledge of the foreign language on the part of the translator. In addition to this it should be born in mind that since the press was the only medium through which translations reached the public at that time, the translator had to meet its ephemeral needs, which forced him to leave aside great literary works as they would have taken too long to produce well at short notice

Owing to the lack of a plain direct style, the language of the early translations was either colloquial or pompous and artificial. With time, however, a more straight-forward and natural style was evolved.

It was the translators of this early period who introduced the reading public in Egypt to new literary genres, particularly that of the novel. The growing influence of Western thought and literature on Egyptian and Syrian writers showed itself in various ways. Some writers attempted to adapt a traditional form, that of the *maqāma*, to modern requirements. Muḥammad al-Muwailiḥī's *Ḥadith ʿĪsā ibn Hishām*,[2] Muhammad Hāfiz Ibrāhīm's *Layāli Satih* (1907), and Muhammad Lutfī Jumʿa's *Layāli al-Rūh al-Hāʾir* (1912) were works of this type, and all were concerned in various degrees with social criticism. However, the *maqāma* form did not become popular. Other writers were influenced to a greater extent by translated works. Mustafā Lutfī al-Manfalūtī wrote essays and short stories, several of which were based on translated material, and also adapted a number of French romances. Jurji Zaidān, a Syrian, produced a large quantity of historical romances, the purpose of which was primarily to teach Arabic history. The plots and the characterization were weak, being

(1) Zayyāt, *Harakat, al-Tarjama*, pp. 121-172, Najm, *al-Qissa*, pp 23-4.

(2) Originally published in parts in *Miṣbāh al-Sharq*, and later in book form in 1907.

merely superimposed on the historical material, and the style was that of a text book.

In the field of poetry too, Western literature had its effect. Poets who wrote in the traditional style, such as Shauqī and Ḥāfiz, were criticised in particular for writing poetry mainly to celebrate official occasions or political events; their opponents, especially 'Abbās Mahmūd al-'Aqqād and Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Qādir al-Māzinī, who were influenced by the English critics and Romantic poets, maintained that a poet should express only his own experiences and feelings, and that a poem should be an "organic unity", whereas in the traditional *qaṣida* a single line is a unit complete in itself This group became known as the "Dīwān" group, after the work of criticism 'Aqqād and Māzinī wrote in 1921.

It is beyond the scope of this outline to give an account of the growth of nationalism, and the struggle for independence. The initial impetus to the development of a modern national literature had already been given· it lay in the spread of modern education closely associated with the influence of European ideas, the creation of an educated class and an ever-increasing reading public, the revival of concern for classical Arabic literature, and a growing interest in European literature, both in the original languages and in translation The importance of the press has already been emphasized as a factor in the modernization of the Arabic language and as the means by which the first modern literary works were presented to the public.

1

THE ROMANTIC TREND

i

The important role played by the early translators of Western literature has already been outlined in the introduction: it was they who introduced new literary genres, especially that of the novel, to the ever increasing Egyptian reading public which had been created by the spread of modern education, and which remained unsatisfied by works of classical Arabic literature, appreciated only by a highly educated few. Second and third-rate romantic[1] and, to a lesser extent, historical novels formed the bulk of the material translated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries from European languages,[2] partly perhaps owing to the ease of translating or paraphrasing such works, and partly in response to popular demand. This type of novel appealed to the taste of the unsophisticated majority of the reading public, who preferred light works of an entertaining nature and were not particularly critical of the quality of what they read. It is therefore not surprising to find that the first novels attempted by Egyptian writers were also sentimental, improbable romances and historical tales, the majority of which were of very poor quality. Even Jurji Zaidān's historical romances, though far better than other works of a similar kind, suffered from the weakness of his plots and his characters, as mentioned in the introduction. The first work which can be considered a true novel, in the sense that it has a proper plot and characterization, and moreover endeavours to depict Egyptian life in a realistic way instead of adapting some Western theme, was Muhammad Ḥusain Haikal's[3] *Zainab*.

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(1) By a romantic novel, I mean one in which the events of the plot are unreal and remote from ordinary life, the characters are sentimental, idealized, and often the innocent victims of the injustice of society These characteristics may of course also apply to the fictional part of a historical novel.

(2) Zayyāt, *Ḥarakat al-Tarjama*, pp 88, 93, 98-9.

(3) Haikal was born in 1888 He studied law in Cairo and later in Paris where he was awarded his doctorate. He abandoned law to become a journalist, and was editor-in-chief of *al-Siyāsa* and *al-Siyāsa al-Usbū'iya*. Although he led an active political life, he held the office of minister several times and was speaker of the=

Zainab was written between 1910 and 1911, while Haikal, then a student in his early twenties, was in Paris preparing his Ph.D. in law, and it was published in 1913, not 1914 as commonly stated. Although the author himself wrote in the introduction to the 2nd edition of *Zainab* that it was first published in 1914,(1) a review of the work by Zakī Cohen was printed in the newspaper *al-Jarīda*, Sept. 18th, 1913, and on the first of *Dhū 'l-Qa'da* A.H. 1331 (Oct. 2nd 1913), another review of *Zainab* appeared in *Majallat al-Bayān*.

Haikal first published the novel under the pseudonym "a village Egyptian" (*Miṣrī fallāḥ*), because, as he subsequently explained in the 2nd edition of *Zainab* which was published under his proper name, he did not wish to be known as a novelist in case it should stand in the way of his career as a lawyer.(2) The critic Yahyā Ḥaqqī does not find this explanation likely and suggests that Haikal was afraid that people would identify him with the hero of the novel, Hāmid, and make his private life the subject of gossip.(3) A similar explanation of the publication of *Zainab* under a pseudonym had already been made in the above-mentioned review by Zakī Cohen in *al-Jarīda*.(4) However the author's true name was obviously known in literary circles as it is mentioned in the review of *Zainab* printed in *Majallat al-Bayān*, Oct 1913.

The story of the novel may be outlined as follows: Zainab is a young and beautiful peasant girl who is sometimes hired to work on the land belonging to Ḥāmid's rich father. Hāmid himself is a young student who spends term-time in the city and his holidays at the village. He is attracted to Zainab whom he meets in the fields where they

=Senate from 1945 to 1950—he nevertheless contributed much to the literary movement in Egypt, working in the same fields as Tāhā Husain, 'Aqqād, and Māzinī Among his important works are biographies of the Prophet Muhammad, the Caliph Abū Bakr, and the Caliph 'Umar, *Thawat al-Adab* (*The Literary Revolution*), and *Mudhakkirāt* (*Memoirs*). Haikal died in 1956.

(1) *Zainab* (2nd ed), p 3 It should be mentioned here that the dating of Egyptian books, especially in this early period, can be a problem, as the books themselves are frequently undated and the authors and critics may give misleading or conflicting information about the date of publication.

(2) *Ibid*, p 3.

(3) Yaḥyā Haqqī, *Fajr al-Qiṣṣa al-Miṣriya*, pp. 43-4

(4) Zakī Cohen, *Ru'ya Jadīda*, *al-Jarīda*, Sept. 18th, 1913, p. 1.

exchange a few kisses. Zainab, however, falls in love with Ibrāhīm, the overseer of the farm labourers in the village. Social convention makes it impossible for Ḥāmid to think of marriage with Zainab, or for Zainab to confess to her parents that she loves Ibrāhīm when she finds that they have consented to her marriage with Ḥasan, who is a good match for her. Zainab is married to Ḥasan, and forces herself to remain faithful to him despite her great love for Ibrāhīm. However, the inward conflict destroys her health, and she finally falls ill and dies of consumption, while Ibrāhīm is away on military service in the Sudan. Ḥāmid meanwhile turns to his cousin ʻAzīza who had been his childhood playmate and whom he had always expected to marry. He sends her a letter telling her of his love, and they agree to meet when their families go out together for an evening stroll. Although they have a brief opportunity to be alone together they find themselves unable to speak of their feelings for each other. ʻAzīza then writes a letter in which she asks Ḥāmid to forget her, because love such as they read of in translated novels is impossible for a girl brought up in seclusion as she has been. She later sends a second letter informing him that her parents are arranging her marriage with another man whom she will have to accept, although she is against the proposed marriage and still thinks of him. Ḥāmid thus loses both Zainab and ʻAzīza, and after a brief, unsuccessful affair with another girl, he leaves his family and goes off to live on his own.

The importance of *Zainab* lies in the fact that it is the first Egyptian novel which is not extremely improbable and packed with coincidences and unlikely events. Even though the course of action in itself may not be entirely convincing, the author has given the novel a good deal of realism by his detailed and accurate descriptions of village life and the country-side, and by his careful preparation for the principal tragedy—the illness and death of Zainab. In addition to this, the author is much more successful in his characterization than previous authors had been, in spite of certain weaknesses which will be discussed below. Ḥāmid in particular is a complex, life-like character, and Zainab, although perhaps exaggeratedly sentimental for a peasant,(1)

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(1) For example, she stares at the moon and dreams (*Zainab*, p. 196); she tries to=

is convincingly depicted as a girl who falls victim to the injustices of the traditional way of life.

Many critics, for instance Yahyā Haqqī,[1] have praised highly Haikal's detailed description of the Egyptian village and the life there. However, it must be admitted that this description frequently serves no artistic purpose in the novel and strikes one as description merely for its own sake. Moreover the reader often loses track of the plot in the mass of repetitive descriptive detail which occasionally becomes quite tedious. It is perhaps for this reason that Haikal entitled his work "*Zainab, Country Scenes and Manners*", as if he were asking the reader to expect not so much a novel as a description of the countryside and the life of the villagers. Although one cannot say for certain that Haikal was influenced in this tendency by the French writer Pierre Loti, it is perhaps worth mentioning that in a collection of essays, *Fī Auqāt al-Farāgh*, he defends the repetitiveness of Pierre Loti's descriptive writing on the grounds that one can enjoy certain things every day —the beauty of the sunrise for example—and the fact that the experience is repeated does not lessen enjoyment but may even increase it.[2] Nevertheless, whatever can be said in defence of this kind of description, carrying it to excess is one of the principal faults of *Zainab*.

Another of the novel's faults is that the characterization, although superior to that in earlier novels, is still weak. This is especially true of the minor characters who are shallow and, like the characters in a myth, are known only by their part in the action. Even dialogue is rarely employed in the novel, and therefore the author is obliged to explain and comment instead of leaving the characters themselves to reveal their personalities. Another serious weakness is that the main characters are overshadowed by the personality of the author: he has forced upon them his way of thinking and does not permit them to behave in accordance with their social background. One should

=kiss a sparrow which jumps from her shoulder to her hand and gazes at her with his tiny eyes, consoling her for her sadness (p. 274), she kisses Ibrāhīm's handkerchief and holds it to her heart when she is dying, requesting that it should be buried with her (p 296). It is extremely difficult to imagine a village girl behaving in this way

(1) Ḥaqqī, *Fajr al-Qiṣṣa*, p 46.

(2) Haikal, *Fī Auqāt al-Farāgh*, p. 93.

perhaps except Ḥāmid from this criticism. He is, to be sure, also a reflection of the author; like the author, he has the same views as the moderate People's Party [1], who in spite of their dislike of out-dated social customs believed in only gradual evolution from them, he holds that reason should conquer emotion, and, throughout the novel, he meditates on every situation and analyses every aspect of any problem that confronts him, although he takes no positive action. This kind of behaviour may be acceptable on the part of Ḥāmid, who is educated and from an upper class family, but such continual musing, heart-searching and passivity seems unnatural when found in Zainab and Ibrāhīm who are supposedly unsophisticated villagers. It is impossible to mention every instance of this, but the examples given below should suffice Ibrāhīm, when he hears rumours that Ḥasan intends to ask for Zainab's hand, meditates as follows: "If only it were possible for him to marry her, he would ask for nothing better! But he would lose Hasan (his friend) and Zainab at the same time. For if he went to her father to ask for her hand, is it conceivable that the latter would consent, knowing what good fortune had in store for his daughter? (A reference to the rumours that Ḥasan, who is a better match, hopes to marry Zainab). Even if her father wished to preserve appearances and asked him for a large sum as *mahr* (bride-price), would this not be equivalent to his refusal? . . .But why? Couldn't he, for her sake, get any *mahr* that could be demanded? Is there anything in the world too dear for Zainab? He would do anything for her sake, and would fulfil all her father's demands. He could sell their buffalo, and borrow a sum which he could repay out of his wages in a year or two. He would do anything else as well. He would steal if necessary! Yes, he must go to her father and ask for her hand!"[2] However, in spite of this decision, he does nothing, as we shall see below.

In the same way Zainab ponders at great length whether she should see Ibrāhīm after her marriage to Ḥasan. First she thinks that she will go secretly at night to meet Ibrāhīm, but she remembers her duty towards her husband and realizes that if she fails in her duty she will destroy her honour and dignity. She then considers how cruel

(1) See Introduction, p 7.

(2) *Zainab*, pp. 102-3.

her father was in forcing her into this position, and comes to the conclusion that a person who is compelled to make a promise does not have to keep his word. Therefore she has no obligations towards her husband and there is no harm in seeing Ibrāhīm. She must stop attaching such importance to every detail so that she can experience the pleasures of life. She imagines how happy she would be in Ibrāhīm's arms, and then suddenly wonders if God who watches them from heaven would bless their happiness, or be angry because they have betrayed a bond knotted by His hand. Would God who is just and merciful and knows the misery she suffers punish her for meeting Ibrāhīm?[1]

Thus we find the principal characters in every situation examining the problem, imagining every possibility, and in spite of that—or perhaps because of it—reaching no definite conclusion and taking no action. It might be said that Haikal wished to show by this passivity in his characters the power of social convention and the way it stifles the characters' intentions. But this unfortunately only applies in the cases of Zainab. Haikal has succeeded in placing her in a situation in which she has no choice but to act as she does, and so finally meet her tragic end. However, this is not so with the other characters. One would gather from the quotation given above that Ibrāhīm had reached a definite decision to ask for Zainab's hand, but instead one finds that for no apparent reason he does not approach her father, and lets time pass in repeated meetings with her during which he assures her of his love, until the cotton picking season arrives, and Hasan, having sold his crop, is in a position to go to Zainab's family and pay the bride-price (*mahr*) for her. Similarly, no convincing reason is given to explain why Hāmid never makes any attempt to ask for 'Azīza's hand, even though as her cousin, and moreover an educated young man from a rich family, he would be a suitable match. Even when she informs him that her parents are about to accept another man and that she is against the proposed marriage, he takes no action and merely yields to disappointment. Finally, again for no convincing reason, he leaves his family and disappears from the novel.

(1) *Zainab*, pp. 133-4. The quotation is rather long and it seemed better to outline Zainab's argument here.

The style of the novel is marked by three features. First, as Professor Gibb remarks, the influence of the French language can be seen in the use of long and complex sentences.(1) Secondly, Haikal at times expresses himself very badly and even makes some grammatical mistakes. Thirdly, he employs colloquial Egyptian Arabic for the dialogue, which is excellent though infrequently used. It should be mentioned here that the problem of whether colloquial Egyptian should be used in a novel, and if so to what extent, was a difficult one, especially for writers in this early experimental period. Classical Arabic, although universally used for narrative and description, tended to sound unnatural in passages of dialogue if the writer employed an elevated style and the characters were supposed to be uneducated or even illiterate. In *Zainab*, Haikal decided to use colloquial Egyptian for the dialogue, and his example was later followed by Taufīq al-Ḥakīm and others.

However, Haikal unfortunately does not confine colloquialisms to the dialogue but scatters them in the narrative and description, which sometimes distorts the style, and this jars particularly if the colloquialism is used unnecessarily where a literary synonym would have done as well. Shauqī Daif has suggested that Haikal was perhaps using colloquial Egyptian in this way in response to the call of Lutfī al-Sayyid (the leader of the People's Party) that Egyptians should create their own literary language which should distinguish them from other Arabs and which should be nearer to Egyptian colloquial speech.(2)

Despite all that has been said about the novel, however, one must agree with Professor Gibb that "Zainab broke away decisively in language, style, subject and treatment from anything that had gone before." Its faults are of "little importance compared with the fact that the effort was made, and that a new, and in its setting, original kind of literary production was added to Arabic literature."(3)

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(1) Gibb, *Studies*, p. 294.

(2) Shauqī Daif, *al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Mu'āṣir fī Miṣr*, p. 241. It might be added here that the novel seems to express several of the beliefs of the People's Party, in particular it can be regarded as an illustration of the need for the emancipation of women, which had been the subject of the famous book *Taḥrīr al-Mar'a* by Qāsim Amīn, who was a leading member of this party, and was admired by Ḥāmid in the novel.

(3) Gibb, *Studies*, p. 292.

The success of *Zainab*, in my opinion, is due to the fact that Haikal drew on the experiences of his own life in writing the novel, and for this reason, it possesses a life-like quality, and, in its presentation and detail at least, a realism which was usually absent in other fiction written at that time. Haikal's achievement paved the way for other authors who had not so far attempted to write novels and who were no doubt encouraged by *Zainab's* success to follow Haikal's example.

Zainab however made its chief impact on literary circles not with its first publication in 1913 but only after its second publication in 1929. Although the novel was welcomed with several favourable reviews after the first publication, it attracted less notice than might have been expected, perhaps partly because the years that followed its first publication were on the whole unfavourable to literary activity. The 1914-18 war[1] and the revolt of 1919 naturally tended to divert the attention of writers and reading public from the literary world to the political events which would determine the future of their country.

Not only did *Zainab* go comparatively unnoticed in 1913, but until the end of the nineteen twenties, although third-rate novelists continued to produce romances and similar works to suit popular taste, no novel of importance appeared except for Muhammad Abū Hadīd's historical novel *Ibnat al-Mamlūk* (1926?).[2]

Generally speaking, the major writers in Egypt during this period were either conservatives like the poets Ahmad Shauqī and Muḥammad Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm, who continued to write in the traditional style, or modernists, some of whom like Ṭāhā Ḥusain, 'Abbās al-'Aqqād, Ibrāhīm al-Māzinī and Haikal were principally critics and literary historians although they wrote in other fields as well. 'Aqqād and Māzinī for instance were busy criticizing the traditional, and in their opinion

(1) Among other things the war necessitated restrictions on publication, and many newspapers had to close down, including *al-Jarīda* which had published *Zainab*. See Ibrāhīm 'Abduh, *Taṭawwur al-Ṣiḥāfa al-Miṣrīya*, p 201

(2) It is true that 'Īsā 'Ubaid published *Thurayyā* in 1922 and Mahmūd Taimūr published *Rajab Efendi* in 1928, and it has been argued that these two works are novels. However each was published with some short stories and therefore they passed unnoticed as novels. In any case, neither is important in the development of the novel.

out-moded style of Shauqī, Ḥāfiẓ and Manfalūṭī,[1] while Ṭāhā Ḥusain raised a storm of protest from the conservative critics headed by Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāfi'ī with the publication of his book *Fi'l-Shi'r al-Jāhili,* in which he applied Western techniques of criticism to Pre-Islamic poetry and came to the conclusion that most of it had been forged in later periods. Other modernists, such as Muḥammad and Maḥmūd Taimūr, Yahyā Haqqī, and Mahmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn, were concerned mainly with the short story.[2]

In the nineteen twenties then, writers were producing poetry, critical essays, some plays, a quantity of bad novels, and several collections of short stories. Indeed the short story during this period reached a position of eminence which it later lost to the novel and never regained. The preference of Egyptian authors for the short story was perhaps due to the comparative ease with which they were able to familiarize themselves with this type of writing, which had some points in common with the traditional *maqāma,* while the writing of a novel required a sustained creative effort for which they had as yet insufficient experience

An additional point to be born in mind here is that at first the public ready to appreciate the first attempts of Egyptian writers at serious works of art in these new genres was strictly limited. The highly educated who would give encouragement to such works were a tiny minority, the vast uncritical majority of the reading public, as mentioned already, wanted to read romances and light entertaining works and were not interested in anything of a more serious or realistic nature, whether a novel or even a short story. The publishers of course had to respond to popular taste. Yahyā Ḥaqqī in his introduction to the 1964 edition of *Sukhriyat al-Nāy,* a collection of short stories by Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn, mentions that when Lāshīn took his second collection of stories, *Yuhkā anna . .* (*It Was Related That . . .*), to be published, the publisher told him that he could not accept it unless he changed its title to *Dumū' al-'Ushshāq* (*Lovers' Tears*). Lāshīn refused, and, according to Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī, published all his works at his own

(1) See Introduction, pp. 9-10
(2) Maḥmūd Taimūr's collections of short stories have been translated into the principal European languages. See Nevill Barbour, *'Audat al-Rūḥ, an Egyptian Novel, Islamic Culture,* vol. 9, 1935, p. 487.

expense, and most probably at a loss too.[1] 'Isā 'Ubaid summed up the position when he complained about the public's neglect of his first collection of short stories, *Ihsān Hānim*, because they preferred third-rate translated novels. He blamed journalists, critics and writers for catering to popular taste all the time, and failing to try to educate the public by offering them for instance the works of Balzac or Anatole France Newspapers published hardly anything but articles on politics, and the editor of a magazine had been known to turn down the offer of a series of psychological short stories on the grounds that they would be far above the mentality of the public; he could print only detective stories. The public thus remained ignorant of what true art was and a writer who was serious about his art met with nothing but discouragement.[2] It is easy to see that, in this atmosphere, an author might well be dissuaded from expending considerable effort on trying to write a serious novel: he could not be sure of finding either a publisher or an appreciative public for it A short story had at least a slightly better chance of publication in a newspaper or periodical.

After the end of the nineteen twenties however, a number of major writers began to make their first attempts at writing a novel, perhaps influenced in this by the success of Haikal's *Zainab*, which was republished in 1929. According to Professor Gibb, the second publication of *Zainab* was "the result of a public demand, stimulated by several factors, amongst which may be included the strengthening of that national self-consciousness which it already foreshadowed, the literary eminence attained by the now confessed author, and the adaptation of the book as the subject of the first cinematograph film produced in Egypt (in the same year, 1929)."[3] Two years later, Māzinī published his *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib* (1931), a romantic novel, and in 1933 appeared Taufīq al-Ḥakīm's *'Audat al-Rūḥ*, which was received enthusiastically in literary circles. This success in its turn raised the prestige of the novel and was no doubt a factor in encouraging other

(1) Lāshīn, *Sukhriyat al-Nāy*, Introduction pp z, n.

(2) See 'Ubaid, *Thurayyā*, Introduction, pp. 3-6.

(3) Gibb, *Studies*, p. 294. Landau states that film production in Egypt began in 1917, and mentions *Zainab* as one of the earliest films though not the first. See his *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, pp. 157-9, 162.

writers such as Ṭāhā Ḥusain and ʿAqqād, already outstanding figures in the literary world, to write their first novels.

Therefore it is probably not going too far to say that the Egyptian novel really began its development in 1929 with the second publication of *Zainab*. Though three trends, romantic, historical and realistic, can be perceived before the late thirties, they began to emerge as distinct types only during the Second World War, when the Egyptian novel, which had still been feeling its way in the nineteen thirties, entered a phase of steady development and progress. By this time writers had gained greater experience and had better assimilated a literary form new to them, while a reading public capable of appreciating their work was steadily increasing

The romantic trend is the first to be discussed in this study, as it was the first to appear It had its beginnings, as seen above, in the earliest Egyptian novels, which were modelled on translated European works and which suffered gravely from their lack of any kind of realism, both action and characters usually being highly improbable. However, although the first Egyptian novel proper, Haikal's *Zainab*, was also a romantic one, the trend was slow to evolve. A few good romantic novels appeared sporadically before and during the Second World War, and of these Māzinī's *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib* (1931), Mahmūd Taimūr's *Nidā' al-Majhūl* (1939), and Tāhā Husain's *Du'ā' al-Karawān* (1941) will be discussed below It was only in the late forties and early fifties that the romantic trend began to expand steadily thanks to the productivity of such writers as Muhammad ʿAbd al-Halīm ʿAbdallāh and Yūsuf al-Sibāʿī. I have chosen to examine Sibāʿī's *Innī Rāḥila* (1950) and ʿAbdallāh's *Shams al-Kharīf* (1952) as representative of this later stage of the romantic trend.

ii

The novel *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib* (*Ibrāhīm the Writer*) by Ibrāhīm al-Māzinī[1] was published in 1931, and was the most important novel to appear in the seventeen years which followed the first publication of *Zainab*.

The story of the novel can be summarized as follows: Ibrāhīm, who has lost his first wife, has a love affair with a nurse, Mary, while he is in hospital for an operation. Then he goes to convalesce with relatives in the country, where he falls in love with his youngest cousin Shūshū. When he asks for her hand, he is refused, because her elder sister is not yet married. He leaves and travels to Luxor, feeling that his dignity has been injured. In Luxor he meets Lailā who loves him passionately, and whom he decides to marry. Lailā learns of his love for Shūshū, and decides to sacrifice herself although she is expecting his child. She breaks off her relationship with Ibrāhīm, pretending that she does not really love him. She then seeks help from a doctor who takes pity on her and eventually marries her. As for Shūshū, she is married to Mahmūd, a distant relative, even though her elder sister is still a spinster. Ibrāhīm is left alone to ponder about his future.

The weaknesses of the course of action, which will be discussed later, are compensated for by Māzini's sense of humour which infuses life into the work and sets it apart from other Egyptian novels. For instance, in an amusing chapter the author describes how the hero Ibrāhīm, who is a writer, has spent a tiring night in the country owing to the mooing of a cow which prevented him from sleeping. He decides to go down into the garden and wait for the sunrise, so that he can write a description of it. However, he chooses the wrong position and

(1) Māzinī was born in 1890 in Cairo. He began to study medicine, but the sight of the dissecting room was too much for him and he decided to train as a teacher instead. He worked as a teacher until 1917 when he took up journalism. With 'Abbās al-'Aqqād, he wrote the *Dīwān* (see Introduction, p. 10) after which the literary school which called for a more modern approach to poetry was named. Māzinī's works include books of literary criticism, poetry, novels, short stories and essays. He died in 1949.

by the time he realizes his mistake the sun has already risen. He then sits down and writes: ' "December—in the country. It appears that cows are more sensitive to the dawn than cocks, and quicker to greet the morning than sparrows. Anyone who is interested can spend the night in the country and get up more than an hour before dawn. That alleged tranquillity does not exist in the country; for if nature is tranquil, cows are restless, and he who desires rest and deep sleep in the country must take with him enough aspirin or *Firāmin* for himself and for cows when necessary" God did not inspire him with more than this or with anything which better resembled poetic themes. He did not write down any of his ideas or feelings since at that moment he had none. However, as he said to himself, what need had he of feelings which he might describe incorrectly or which he might embellish in such a way that their colours were brighter or darker? Is there not a (literary) school which holds that description should correspond exactly to reality, devoid of the ornament and decoration of imagination? In accordance with the teaching of this school, he continues his notes on sunrise, which he feels may be of use to him if he writes a novel· "The sky looks crimson, then it turns green for some reason, then it turns yellow or white for another reason which is not clear." '[1]

Māzinī's treatment of the few rural scenes in the novel is often sarcastic, as can be seen from the quotation above, and can be contrasted with Haikal's excessively lengthy descriptions in which his love of the countryside is shown. Another aspect of the author's humour is his powerful imagination, which delights in unusual imagery. This is evident for instance in a dream of Ibrāhīm's. he dreams that he is a bottle of iced beer which the Mayor of Alexandria drinks while eating a large quantity of shrimps. Ibrāhīm protests in the Mayor's throat and stops there, but the Mayor forces him down into his paunch.[2]

The novel indeed is better as individual episodes than as a whole, for when one considers it as a whole, certain weaknesses in the course

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(1) *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib*, pp 88-9 This reference to a literary school, presumably realism, will be mentioned again below.

(2) *Ibid.*, pp 178-9. A similar unusual idea is the theme for one of Māzinī's novels *'Audun 'alā Bad'* (1943), in which he dreams that he has become a child physically while mentally still an adult.

of action stand out. The author does not explain for instance why Shūshū is made to marry Mahmūd whom she does not love, even though the reason given for refusing Ibrāhīm — that Shūshū's elder sister was not yet married — applies equally in the case of Mahmūd. It is also not clear why Shaikh 'Alī, Shūshū's brother-in-law, fails to do anything to forward Ibrāhīm's marriage with Shūshū or prevent her marriage with Mahmūd, although he had previously been so eager to marry Shūshū to Ibrāhīm that he persuaded Lailā to renounce Ibrāhīm even though she is expecting his baby. In these and some other situations, the characters are given insufficient reason for acting as they do.

It is possible that some of these weaknesses may be traced to the author's incorporation in his work of certain personal experiences without explaining the motives behind them or sufficiently adapting them to the requirements of the novel, for Ni'māt Fu'ād states in her *Adab al-Māzini* that Māzinī's son told her that the family knew the events recorded in *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib* as well as the characters; only the names were changed to make them unrecognizable.[1] However it seems unlikely that this could be true of all the events in the novel, particularly the episode of Lailā which has a Western flavour. Ibrāhīm's reference to a literary school "which holds that description should correspond exactly to reality"[2] should be remembered here; it is possible that, in this early period when Western literary terms were not very well understood, Māzinī thought realism to be the exact copying of real life as in a photograph.[3]

Most critics agree at least that Ibrāhīm the hero is basically Ibrāhīm al-Māzinī.[4] Ibrāhīm of the novel has the same name as the author and is also a writer. He has a strong sense of humour, one of the qualities which make him attractive to women, is cultivated and intelligent, and given to pondering on problems of all kinds. He is perhaps the most convincing intellectual figure to appear in the Egyptian novel

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(1) Fu'ād, *Adab al-Māzinī*, p 200
(2) See above p 23
(3) Even in the 1940s it is clear that such a term as realism was not always properly understood See below, p. 28
(4) See for instance Badr, *Tatawwur al-Riwāyā*, p. 343; Mandūr, *Namādhij Bashariya*, pp. 186-8.

until, about thirty years later, Najib Maḥfūẓ presented in his *Trilogy* and later novels such characters as Kamāl and Anīs. Indeed the poetic style of some of the passages in which Ibrāhīm muses on the problems of life reminds one of similar passages in Maḥfūz's works, except that in the latter such meditations are always an integral part of the novel, whereas in *Ibrāhim al-Kātib* they are sometimes digressions independent of the action. As pointed out by Dr. ʿAli al-Rāʿī, some passages are also found in Māzinī's collection of essays *Qabd al-Rih* (*Grasping the Wind*, 1927) and have been inserted in the novel with only slight alterations [1]

The minor characters in the novel are much more vivid and life-like than those in Haikal's *Zainab*, and some are extremely entertaining, for example Shaikh ʿAlī who, while always abusing and scolding those around him, is nevertheless very generous and kind-hearted, and Ahmad al-Mayyit, the manager of Shaikh ʿAlī's land, who firmly believes himself to be dead. However, as with *Zainab's* characters, one occasionally feels that the characters are better educated and more sophisticated than one would expect people of such backgrounds to be. For instance, Shūshū reads works by Spinoza, Freud, Tolstoy, Maupassant and Shaw, although this would be surprising enough for many university lecturers today, let alone a girl like Shūshū without university education from a country family in the nineteen twenties.

Māzinī's novel was severely criticized by his contemporaries for one fault in particular, and that was the insertion of some pages from the novel *Sanin* by the Russian writer Artsybashev. These passages, which form part of the episode of Lailā, caused a disproportionate outcry among writers and critics, as some of those who defended Māzinī pointed out, for the greater part was ordinary description which any author could have written, and was indeed inferior to many witty and humourous passages in the novel, some examples of which have been given above. Nevertheless, this lapse on the author's part had a bad effect on the prestige of the novel, and when added to his "borrowings" in other works of his, on the prestige of Māzinī as a writer.[2]

(1) Rāʿī, *Dirāsāt fī 'l-Riwāya al-Misriya*, pp. 93-4

(2) The whole question of Māzinī's plagiarism is dealt with in Niʿmāt Fu'ād's *Adab al-Māzinī*, pp. 258-268.

In 1943, Māzinī published *Ibrāhīm al-Thānī* (*Ibrahim the Second*),[1] which is a sequel to *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib*, and reflects the author in another phase of his life. Here Ibrāhīm is a married man who becomes bored with married life, and has love affairs with two young girls, 'Āida and Mīmī. The first is a weak personality haunted by the idea that she will die young, and finally she dies of a combination of dysentery, depression and exhaustion from nursing her mother. The second is encouraged by Ibrāhīm to marry Ṣādiq, a relation of hers, when Ibrāhīm fears that his relationship with her may lead to trouble. He returns in the end to his wife and takes her to the Lebanon for a holiday.

The detailed examination of the conflict between faithfulness and pleasure, and of every other problem, covers most pages of this novel, although the tediousness of this is sometimes relieved by touches of the author's sense of humour. Ibrāhīm for instance remarks: "I wish it were possible for somebody, my mother for example, or Taḥīya, my wife, to sequestrate my youth so as to keep it safe for me until I become reasonable, as I almost am now, so that . . . I can make good use of this youth which passes away without slackening speed . . . or I wish life could be darned as a garment is darned whenever a part of it is worn."[2]

Such humorous imagery, however, is not as common as it is in *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib*, and is usually overwhelmed by logical analysis and reasoning. The author is fully justified in stating through Tahīya, Ibrāhīm's wife, that Ibrāhīm "feels with his reason".[3] Indeed, every situation is examined with this exhaustive analysis, and the reader gradually comes to feel that Māzinī's method of presentation is here very near to that of his friend 'Aqqād in the latter's novel, *Sāra*,[4] although *Ibrāhīm al-Thānī* is more vivid and livelier than *Sāra*. This is due to the variety of situations in Māzinī's work, and also to Māzinī's humourous approach and powerful imagination, which enables him to introduce his ideas in a more interesting way than 'Aqqād. The dif-

(1) This novel is more realistic than romantic, yet I have preferred to discuss it here since it is a continuation of *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib*, and will only be dealt with briefly as it is not very important.

(2) *Ibrāhīm al-Thānī*, p. 69.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 111.

(4) *Sāra* will be discussed below.

ference between the styles of the two authors can be seen for example in their methods of describing the same situation: a character meditating on a problem. 'Aqqād writes, "Here, in the mind of this man, this single man, there went on as long and as violent an argument as that which takes place between two different men, each of whom is persistent in his resolve."(1)

Māzinī on the other hand expresses this idea as follows: "He leant back and began to think. Absorbed in this, he imagined that his self become visible, sitting opposite him with one leg crossed over the other. This seemed so real to him that he was on the point of offering it a cigarette." He goes on to use such phrases as: "His self shook its head violently in disagreement," or "His self felt that it had been too rash and desisted."(2)

It should be mentioned here that the problem of whether to use classical Arabic or colloquial Egyptian Arabic for the dialogue, referred to above in connection with *Zainab*, was solved by Māzinī in a different manner. Whereas Haikal had used colloquial in all his dialogue, Māzinī's technique was usually to translate colloquial phrases into simple classical ones where possible,(3) so that the dialogue sounded natural and at the same time harmonized with the classical Arabic of the narrative and descriptive passages. This technique has been adopted by many other writers among whom for instance is Najib Maḥfūẓ.

(1) 'Aqqād, *Sāra*, p. 21.

(2) *Ibrāhīm al-Thānī*, pp. 216-7

(3) It is noticeable however in *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib* that some characters speak classical Arabic, some colloquial Egyptian, and some, Ahmad al-Mayyit for instance, even speak classical Arabic in one part of the novel, and colloquial Egyptian in another. The choice of language does not always seem to be based on the extent of the character's education, and the reason for this confusion is unclear.

iii

Mahmūd Taimūr's[1] novel *Nidā' al-Majhūl* (*The Call of the Unknown*) appeared in 1939. The novel is a clear example of a romantic work, yet even in the nineteen forties in Egypt ideas about the exact meanings of Western literary terms were vague,[2] and it is perhaps for this reason that such a knowledgeable critic as Dr. Mandūr, for instance, was able to refer to the work as "a well-defined specimen of realistic literature".[3] To demonstrate this, he discusses the minor characters in the novel, not taking into account the fact that "minor figures in most stories are presented in only one aspect as 'flat', 'thin', 'disc' characters",[4] and that therefore they tend to seem superficially realistic whether or not they appear in a realistic work. *Nidā' al-Majhūl* however, far from being a realistic work, has the atmosphere of a fairy tale, as can be seen from this summary:

The narrator, an Egyptian who is unnamed, goes to the Lebanon on holiday. He stays at a village consisting of only three houses and a small hotel capable of accomodating eight people. There he meets Miss Evans, a British lady who has come to the Lebanon to forget an unsuccessful love affair. She hears of a mysterious castle built in the mountains, and sets out to discover it, accompanied by the narrator, the hotel owner Shaikh 'Ād, and a guide named Majā'is. After a long and difficult journey they arrive at the castle. The eccentric owner is shot accidentally when he tries to prevent their approach. They tend him till he recovers, and he tells them meanwhile the story of his past: his name is Yūsuf, and in his youth he had fallen in love with a girl called Ṣafā' who was betrothed by her family to another

(1) Mahmūd Taimūr was born in 1894 into a well-to-do family with literary and scholarly interests. He did not complete his studies at the Higher School of Agriculture as his interests diverted him to literature He is a prolific writer and has produced many novels, plays and works on literary criticism, but he is best known as a writer of short stories in which he usually portrays the Egyptian lower classes.

(2) See also above p. 24, where Māzinī's concept of realism is mentioned.

(3) Mandūr, *Fī 'l-Mīzān al-Jadīd*, p 25.

(4) J. Shipley, *Dictionary of World Literary Terms*, p. 52.

man. Yūsuf made an agreement with Ṣafā' that on her wedding day he would shoot her to prevent the marriage, and then immediately afterwards kill himself. But having killed her, he found himself unable to commit suicide as he had vowed, and therefore retired from the world and went to live as a hermit in his castle. When Yūsuf's wound has healed, the party leave him and set off on their way back to the hotel, except for Majā'is who was killed when he fell down a well-like hole. On the third day of the return journey, the narrator awakes to find that Miss Evans has returned to the castle.

It is obvious that such a story is far from complying with the simplest principles of realism, and reminds us rather of the kind of novels which had been written before *Zainab* — and indeed are still being written. The setting is an imaginary one outside of Egypt, the plot of the novel has an element of the fantastic about it, and of the principal characters only one is Egyptian, all these being features commonly found in earlier novels, which were often improbable, romantic tales involving non-Egyptian characters in a non-Egyptian setting.(1) It seems that here Taimūr was attempting to break away from the realism of his short stories, which portray the life of the Egyptian lower classes and were particularly rich in local colour, and was trying to give his work a more universal quality.(2) However one feels that the novel, while having no well-developed plot or profoundly realised characters, at the same time has no universal significance which would justify this approach.

Among the characters, it is the minor figures who are the most successful. There is for instance Kan'ān, one of the guests at the hotel, who claims to be a professor from Istanbul and takes every opportunity to display his great erudition, and in fact only reveals the more his pretentions and his ignorance Another entertaining character is Majā'iṣ the guide, a villager proud of his knowledge of the mountains which are his home; he proves however to be clumsy, stupid and of little use as a guide. Shaikh 'Ād too is well depicted as a good-natured, kind and sensible man. Miss Evans on the other hand has few realistic touches about her and seems very unconvincing.

(1) See Badr, *Taṭawwur al-Riwāya*, pp. 141-4, 154-6.
(2) See below p. 107.

Nidā' al-Majhūl is worth discussing here not so much because of its importance in the development of the romantic trend, but because of the attention it has attracted both from the critics and from the public. The work has been chosen as set reading for secondary schools, and has been translated into English and French.

iv

Critics have differed in their opinions of *Du'ā' al-Karawān* (*The Cry of the Plover*), Ṭāhā Ḥusain's[1] first novel, published in 1941. Dr. Muḥammad Mandūr for instance states, "We cannot tolerate (the omission of) *'l'illusion du réel'* which should be present in every good novel, and which we do not see present in all parts of the novel before us. This is for two main reasons. The first is the author's domination of his characters. The second is the petrification of his style in a particular form which is known to all."[2] Dr. Mandūr goes on to condemn the characters' use of the author's own style, which is not "close to the language of reality", but is "an artistic, artifical style with its fixed characteristics", and he gives several examples of the artistic faults caused by the adoption of such a style by all the characters.

Dr. 'Alī al-Rā'ī, on the other hand, is of the opinion that *Du'ā' al-Karawān* is "one of the most fascinating and excellent novels known to Arabic literature". He disagrees with the points on which Dr. Mandūr criticises the novel, saying that "all these are the instruments for the handling of realistic works, and no one has said that *Du'ā' al-Karawān* aims at realism. It is a poetic, rhetorical novel and it does not matter much if it has no resemblance to reality, nor does it suffer much harm because of this. . . . . We should then state from the start that *Du'ā' al-Karawān* is a poetical, romantic novel, not realistic or prosaic. It has a particular tendency towards oratory and long resounding monologues. It relies clearly on the music of words."[3]

(1) Ṭāhā Ḥusain was born in 1889 Although he lost his sight at the age of three, he had a normal education at al-Azhar and at what is now Cairo University, from which he received a doctorate in 1914 He studied in France and received a second doctorate from the Sorbonne He was the first Egyptian to hold a Professorship at Cairo University, and has occupied various posts including that of Minister of Education He has written more than fifty works of criticism, literary research and history, as well as some novels and an autobiographical work *al-Ayyām* which has been translated into English and French. Ṭāhā Ḥusain is considered by many the leading Arab writer of the 20th century.

(2) Mandūr, *Fī 'l-Mīzān al-Jadīd*, p. 35.

(3) Rā'ī, *Dirāsāt*, pp. 140-1.

In fact there is some truth in the remarks of both critics. As Dr. Rā'ī says, *Du'ā' al-Karawān* is not a realistic novel and so it should not be judged by the criteria of realism. For this reason, Dr. Mandūr should not have laid such stress on the author's "artificial style", and after all it is this rhetorical and musical style which more than anything else gives the novel its prestige. Nevertheless, it is difficult to agree with Dr. Rā'ī that just because the novel is a romantic one, does not matter much if it has no resemblance to reality. First, the novel does suffer immensely from the neglect of verisimilitude; secondly, one wonders why Dr. Rā'ī should consider verisimilitude irrelevant in a romantic novel. In his *An Experiment in Criticism*, C.S. Lewis differentiates between two kinds of realism, the first of which being what he calls "realism of presentation, the art of bringing something close to us, making it palpable and vivid, by sharply observed or sharply imagined detail", and the second what he calls "realism of content": "A fiction is realistic in content when it is probable or 'true to life'. " He cites to illustrate this, *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Great Expectations* as examples of "realism of presentation", *Middlemarch* and *War and Peace* as examples of "realism of content". "In the first two we see (by and large) such events and such behaviour as would be probable and characteristic of human life, given the situation. But the situation itself is not." In the second two "all is probable and typical of human life. These are the sort of things that might happen to anyone ... things like them have probably happened to thousands."(1)

One is inclined to think that a novel, any novel, should contain at least one kind of these two realisms, and that of the two, it is the latter, realism of presentation, which is the most essential In her *The English Novel: Form and Function*, D. Van Ghent states that "the fictional hypothesis is peculiar in that it has to carry at every moment the full weight of all its concrete experimental data. For the rate at which bodies fall in a vacuum, it is perfectly irrelevant to science whether the bodies might be feathers or men, ostrich feathers or feathers of a Chinese nightingale, politicians or plumbers ... But for fiction the particular body that a thing has is of the very greatest importance to the whole fictional structure. Does it squeak, is it scared, is it brown,

(1) Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, pp. 57-62.

is it round, is it chilly, does it think, does it mash? *Questions of this kind fiction has to be constantly concerned with in order to have any formal existence at all.*"(1) (The italics are mine.)

To return to *Du'ā' al-Karawān*, the novel lacks a great deal of "realism of presentation", which similar romantic works possess. Not only do all the characters speak in the same style of classical Arabic, but there is nothing to indicate the approximate date at which the events of the novel occur, and the town in which the main part of the action takes place is not named. Even such an important character as the irrigation engineer who is the indirect cause of Hanādī's death, and who marries the heroine Āmina, remains nameless. In addition to this some details of the action are improbable, as can be seen from the following summary of the novel:

A peasant in a village in Upper Egypt drives out his sister and her two daughters Āmina and Hanādī when her husband is killed because of a scandal involving women (no details about this are given). They settle in a town where they all work as servants, Āmina at the house of the *ma'mūr* (a government official), Hanādī with an irrigation engineer, and the mother with a family from the country. Hanādī falls in love with her master and sleeps with him When the mother finds out, she decides that they should leave the town, and sends for her brother who comes to fetch them. On their way home to the village, he kills Hanādī in front of her mother and younger sister Āmina, and buries her in the pit which he has already dug for this purpose. Āmina is so shocked by this experience that she becomes dangerously ill. When she recovers, she runs away from the village and rejoins the *ma'mūr*'s family where she studies with her master's daughter many subjects including French. She succeeds in finding a position as servant to the engineer who had been the cause of her sister's death, and the remaining half of the novel is devoted to the description of how she manages to win his love and marry him.

Among the most serious of the plot's weaknesses is firstly that the reason given for the man driving his sister and her family from her home is inadequate. Given the social conditions of a village in Upper Egypt, one might expect that if instead the sister had been caught with

(1) Van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form and Function*, Introduction, p. 4.

a man, she would have been killed by a member of her family and her husband might have had to leave the village to save his face. But it is difficult to imagine a man, merely because his brother-in-law is disgraced and killed, driving out his sister, "a single woman with a share of beauty which would make men desire her and would entice the shameless to her, with two wretched girls who are good at hardly anything "[1] This seems even less likely in Upper Egypt where the strong sense of honour which leads families to protect their women's virtue as far as possible, would be incompatible with driving out an uneducated and inexperienced woman to make a living on her own, thus exposing her to dangers more likely to be a threat to her honour. This however is what happens in the novel, and when, inevitably, one of the daughters is seduced, the mother sends for help to her brother, the original cause of all their troubles, knowing very well that, for the sake of the family's honour, he will kill her daughter Then, as a final touch, Āmina marries the engineer who ruined her sister.

It seems that the author here is principally concerned with presenting an ethical and social message: he intends to make people aware of the crimes committed in the name of honour, and wishes perhaps to indicate that love should take the place of revenge. His concern with the message however leads him to create these unlikely situations, the improbability of which is often more strongly felt because of the absence of realistic detail, and to force his characters to behave unnaturally.

The heroine Āmina who relates the story is one of the most improbable characters. She is an illiterate girl in her teens who comes from a village in Upper Egypt, yet she behaves at all times in a most sophisticated and mature manner, and she has the insight which enables her to describe all the other characters' personalities and inner motives. The reasons which are given in the latter part of the novel to explain why she goes to work for the engineer are not at all convincing The principal motive seems to be her curiosity about the man who caused her sister's death, and for whom she feels a strange attraction, although occasionally the idea of hate and revenge is mentioned. Indeed, the reader begins to feel that the first part of the novel has very

(1) *Du'ā' al-Karawān*, p. 16.

little connection with the second, which seems to be a new story describing how Āmina achieves her aim of winning the engineer's love and marrying him, despite the difference of their respective classes and education.

Nevertheless, some situations in the novel are described with true psychological insight, which can be appreciated regardless of the improbability of the character through whose eyes the situation is seen For instance, the following passage which describes Āmina's efforts to comfort her sister is an example of the author's ability to depict human emotions in a convincing way Hanādī has been silent since she had the affair with the engineer, even her mother has not spoken a word with her, and she is dreading the arrival of her uncle and the punishment which she will have to suffer. Āmina wakes up at midnight to find her sister standing there distractedly. She then comforts her until Hanādī burst into tears. "Her voice faltered and then she was shaking convulsively, shedding copious tears. She poured out violent, broken sobs. I was kneeling at her side, holding her to me and kissing her, trying as far as I could to restore to her calmness, peace and tranquillity of soul When some time had passed, her body ceased to shake, her breathing became easier, but her tears still flowed, and she nestled in my arms as if she were a child submitting to her tender mother Her head rested on my shoulder, and like this she spent a moment, the sweetness of which I have never forgotten."(1)

Dr Mandūr however picks on this same passage to criticize as follows: "What sweetness will Āmina never forget, when the two sisters are in a situation which arouses bitter suffering?" He goes on to suggest that the author should have stopped at the phrase "Her head rested on my shoulder."(2) But as most readers would probably agree, this kind of "sweetness" is not confined only to pleasant situations; indeed the sweetness of the pleasure and relief felt when one has succeeded in giving comfort to another is a sensation commonly experienced in unhappy situations, and the description of it is very apt and lifelike in this context, where the younger sister must feel honoured by her sister's trust. Another particularly well-written pas-

(1) *Du'ā' al-Karawān*, pp. 30-31
(2) Mandūr, *Fī 'l-Mīzān al-Jadīd*, p. 38

sage in the novel is the description of Hanādī's murder, for which the author prepares by building up an atmosphere of terror. Hanādī's feelings when she senses that she will be killed, and the effect of the violent scene on her mother and her sister, are described skilfully and realistically.

However, what gives the novel its popularity, apart from the celebrity of its author, Ṭāhā Ḥusain, is the style, which is admired by many readers, although it does impair the work artistically when it is used by all characters as is the case here. Such readers find compensation for the lack of realism in "the music of words" and the "stateliness and splendour of expression", to use Dr. Rā'ī's phrases.(1) Besides this, the ethical message of the novel, which shows what crimes may be committed for the sake of honour, appeals to a large audience in the Arab world.

(1) Rā'ī, *Dirāsāt*, p. 142.

V

Yūsuf al-Sibā'ī [1] wrote three novels in the period covered by this study, *Nā'ib 'Izrā'il* (*Azrail's Deputy*, 1947), *Arḍ al-Nifāq* (*The Land of Hypocrisy*, 1949) and *Innī Rāḥila* (*I Am Departing*, 1950). The first two novels present imaginary and humorous situations in a way which reminds us of Māzinī's works. In *Nā'ib 'Izrā'il* for instance, the narrator has the powers of Azrail, the angel of death, but still thinks and feels as the man he is. Sympathy for his fellow men leads him to spare the lives of various people whose souls he was to have taken. These characters are types chosen by the author to enable him to make some criticisms of society in a humorous setting. In *Arḍ al-Nifāq*, the narrator takes a drug which forces him to speak the truth, and as a result a series of comic situations arise between the narrator and other characters, his mother-in-law, for example Sibā'ī's play *al-Baḥth 'an Jasad* (*The Search for a Body*, 1953) shows the influence of Māzinī even more strongly, for both this work and Māzinī's *'Audun 'alā Bad'* (1943)[2] deal with the same situation, that of a man who becomes a child physically while mentally he remains an adult. The conflict between the abilities of a child and the desires of a man creates a humorous atmosphere.

With the novel *Innī Rāḥila*, however, Sibā'ī enters a new phase of development in his novel writing, in which the theme of love dominates the work.

The central idea of *Innī Rāḥila*, like that of Haikal's *Zainab*, is the

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(1) Yūsuf al-Sibā'ī was born in Cairo in 1917. His father was one of the leading figures in the literary movement in Egypt Sibā'ī graduated in 1937 from the Military Academy and in 1943 was appointed lecturer in military history there. He has led a very active life in the literary world, and is Secretary General of several literary organisations among which is the Higher Council of Arts, Literature and Social Sciences. He has written many collections of short stories, several novels, some plays and collections of articles. In the field of politics he occupies an important place as the Secretary General of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Organization. In addition he is now the editor-in-chief of *Ākhir Sā'a*, a leading political and social weekly.

(2) See above p. 23.

misery created by forcing a girl to marry a man when she is already in love with someone else. The frequent use of this theme in novels and films is an indication that even today, and even in better educated, more sophisticated families, this problem still arises.

In Sibā'ī's work, the narrator is 'Āida, a Pasha's daughter. When she was young her father had divorced her mother, who had fallen in love with another man, and as a result 'Āida has grown up with a profound contempt for love and affection.

Nevertheless she falls in love with her cousin Ahmad, an army officer, who proposes to her. Her father refuses to give his consent, and she is married to Tūtū, the son of an ex-Prime Minister. However she continues to love Ahmad, especially as she finds that she is unable to respect her husband who has no morals and cares nothing for family life. Aḥmad meanwhile is married to another girl, whom he does not love, and who dies in childbirth with her baby On the same day as this tragedy, 'Āida finds her husband in their bed with the wife of one of their friends She is enraged and goes to the wife's husband to tell him about the scandal, so that he can take vengeance, but, to her shocked disappointment, he accepts the situation calmly and tries to convince her to sleep with him as a kind of revenge She almost yields to this temptation, but at the last moment, she remembers Ahmad who still loves and respects her, and wonders what he would think of her afterwards She leaves the house immediately and, on her way to her family's home, although it is night, she stops for a while at the *sāqiya* (water-wheel), where she used to meet Ahmad. It happens that Ahmad, who often goes to the water wheel to recall his happiest memories, is also there and calls out to her in the darkness. As they are both in the depths of despair and find their lives utterly hateful, they go together to Alexandria on the same night There, they spend two wonderful nights, but on the third, Ahmad dies from a ruptured appendix 'Āida is so shattered that she decides to die with him. When she has written down their story, she throws the notebook out of the beach hut in which they have been staying, and sets fire to the hut with herself and Ahmad's body inside it "Under the burning debris lay two figures in embrace."

This sentimental ending is only one of the highly improbable

situations to be found in the novel. The heroine herself is a weak and unconvincing character; above all, one would not expect a girl of her class and education to behave with such submissiveness over the matter of her marriage. As Dr. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Qutt says about 'Āida in his *Fī 'l-Adab al-Miṣrī al-Mu'āṣir*, where he criticizes some novels because of the passivism of their characters, "Her passivism reached its height, or its depth, when she submitted to her father's will with humble resignation. She did not raise her voice, even in sobbing, although she was aware that her submission and her agreement to marry Tūtū meant to ruin of her life and the life of Ahmad too."[1]

As pointed out above, the message of the novel, if it can be said to have any at all, is that a marriage forced upon an unwilling girl is bound to end in disaster, and this of course necessitates that 'Āida submit to her father. However, Sibā'ī would have done more justice to his work had he chosen for his heroine, as Haikal did in *Zainab*, a character who was obliged by her circumstances and social condition to submit in silence. As it is, the submission of 'Āida to her father without a single world of protest is one of the weakest points in the action, and it seems that the author has neglected an opportunity to give some moral significance to his novel in his concern to produce a poignant, if unlikely, love story. 'Āida is again felt to be passive and unconvincing in her behaviour when she finds out about her husband's infidelity, and moreover realizes that he would consider it natural for her to have an affair with his friend Maḥmūd while he has an affair with Mahmūd's wife. In such circumstances, it would be normal for an Egyptian girl to go to her family who would help and advise her, but 'Āida makes no move to consult her family — from whom indeed she seems to have been cut off ever since her marriage — even though her father was the one responsible for imposing this husband on her.

The course of the action is also marred by some unlikely coincidences, for instance the meeting of 'Āida and Ahmad by chance at the water-wheel on the very day when 'Āida discovers her husband in bed with Mahmūd's wife and Ahmad loses his wife and child, and, more important, the death of Ahmad at the end of the novel. As Dr. Quṭṭ suggests,[2] it seems that this kind of ending is necessitated by the

(1) Quṭṭ, *Fī 'l-Adab al-Miṣrī al-Mu'āṣir*, p. 26-7.
(2) *Ibid.*, p. 29.

passivity of the characters, from whom no positive action can be expected, and moreover the fact that Aḥmad and 'Āida have now sinned together because of the force of circumstances requires that as idealized characters they be punished by death.

What makes this novel, and also Sibā'ī's later novels, so popular especially among young people of the upper classes, is the detailed description of first love which is usually experienced by teenagers. It is for this same reason that most critics do not hold Sibā'ī's works in great esteem, another reason being that Sibā'ī's style is rather inexpressive and journalistic. In emotional passages, the author tends to use conventional phrases and clichés, and makes an excessive use of synonyms, as can be seen in this example; "There you have my story ... a story, I swear to you, that will arouse your latent sorrow, excite your emotions, make your tears flow, and wet the corners of your eyes."[1]

When all has been said however, it should be pointed out that Sibā'ī possesses many of the qualities which go to make up a good story-teller. He has an ability to hold one's attention throughout, and he succeeds in making one swallow the improbable, as the realism of the details of the characters' reactions in unlikely situations lead one to suspend judgement on the course of action.[2] In addition to this, Sibā'ī's dialogue, usually written in simple classical Arabic, is very natural and cleverly used.

(1) *Innī Rāḥila*, p. 23.

(2) It should be born in mind that *Innī Rāḥila* was Sibā'ī's first love story; his later novels have more realistic plots.

vi

When Muhammad 'Abd al-Ḥalīm 'Abdallāh[1] began to write his first novels in the nineteen forties, he met with immediate success. The first novel, *Laqīta* (*The Foundling*, 1947), was awarded a prize by the Academy of the Arabic Language (*al-Majmaʿ al-Lughawi*) and the second, *Ba'd al-Ghurūb* (*After the Sunset*, 1950), was awarded a prize by the Ministry of Education. More important than these however is *Shams al-Kharif* (*The Autumn Sun*, 1952), which won the State Prize for Literature in 1953, and which will be discussed here.

The novel can be divided into two parts, almost equal in length, the first of which describes the life of the hero and narrator, Mukhtār, in Alexandria. As a boy he makes no progress at school, mainly because of his unhappy home life. His parents quarrel frequently, after one of these quarrels, his father deserts the family for five months and returns seriously ill. He finally dies about a year after his return, and Mukhtār's life now enters a new phase, in which he is not only deprived of his father's guidance and control, but also suffers as a result of living with a sick and ignorant mother who shows him no love, and often taunts him with his failure at school instead of helping him to overcome his difficulties. Feeling neglected and hating his home, he frequently runs away from school and goes to 'Izbat Khūrshīd near Alexandria, which is the home of Sakīna, a peasant girl with whom he has fallen in love. The crisis reaches its height when his mother, encouraged by an irresponsible friend named Zainab, marries 'Abbās Efendī who already has one wife and several children. Mukhtār, feeling more than ever the need for affection, and jealous of his stepfather, leaves his family and Alexandria altogether and runs away to Cairo.

This part takes up half the novel and is almost independent of the second part which describes Mukhtār's life in Cairo. There at first

(1) Muḥammad 'Abd al-Halīm 'Abdallāh was born in 1913, and graduated from Dār al-'Ulūm in Cairo. He is now the Chief Editor for the Academy of the Arabic Language. He has written several novels and some collections of short stories.

he has a miserable time trying to find a job. He falls in love with F., a divorcée five years older than he, who is a romantically disposed woman. She had been unable to bear the practical attitude of her husband, a successful businessman, and as a result yielded to the temptation of committing adultery with a young and handsome neighbour. The latter refused to marry her, yet her conscience forced her to get a divorce from her husband, who remained unaware of her infidelity. F. confesses her guilt in several letters to Mukhtār, who is shocked at first but eventually forgives and marries her. F. is filled with gratitude for his forgiveness, and stands beside him, encouraging and helping him, until he succeeds in his examinations and gets a better job. A few years later she becomes ill with consumption and dies Mukhtār refuses to marry again to spare his son Wahīd from suffering as he himself did. He devotes his life to the upbringing and education of Wahīd, who eventually becomes a doctor specializing in chest diseases, so that he can help to combat the disease which had preyed upon his mother.

Each half of the novel could have constituted a separate novel in itself if the author had enlarged on the psychological and social problems raised and analysed them in greater detail. He could for instance have dealt more profoundly with such points as Mukhtār's need for affection, or his jealousy of his stepfather, but he has preferred instead to accumulate a number of events and problems which do not develop naturally one from another to form a well-knit, convincing course of action, but are rather a series of episodes linked only by the person of Mukhtār. For example, the story of the love affair of Mukhtār with Sakīna, whom he meets when out on a bicycle ride in the country to escape from school, not only seems unlikely enough in itself, but does not further the course of action and adds little to our knowledge of the characters. The incident appears merely to provide the author with an opportunity to describe the rural scenes at 'Izbat Khūrshīd and the pleasant simplicity of the country people These descriptions, however, despite the artificial manner of their introduction, are some of the few life-like and expressive passages describing the countryside to be found in Egyptian novels.

In the same way, one does not feel that F. herself is a convincing human being with an essential, relevant role in the action; she seems

rather to be an idealized character through which the author introduces an ethical message about the attitude of society towards a woman who has sinned once and repented. Also Wahība, the servant who loves the hero and hides her golden earrings in his suitcase so that it may help him in his hard life in Cairo, appears to be there only to illustrate that, as the hero believes, true nobility is not confined to people of high birth, for those whom we despise are sometimes even more noble than their masters[1] Although the hero does not return Wahība's love, he respects her much more than his mother, whom he even refuses to call "my mother" throughout.

At any rate, the introduction of such situations and characters deprives the work of its artistic unity, makes it less realistic, and prevents the author from dealing with his situations and problems in depth. This does not mean that all the situations of the novel are treated lightly and superficially, for indeed some of them are admirably written, such as the chapter showing the effect on Mukhtār of his mother's second marriage, especially when his stepfather, 'Abbās Efendi, moves in to live with them Another example is the description of Mukhtār's reaction to F.'s confession. F. has prepared the ground for her admission by a long discussion with him about the attitude society should take towards a woman who commits adultery only once: whether society should accept her repentance, and so add another normal member to its family, or reject her, and so force her to plunge deeper into degradation? Although Mukhtār favours the first course at the discussion when the matter is merely theoretical, his views change when he is faced with F.'s confession, and this is a fine realistic touch. At first he feels contempt for her, and decides to put an end to his relationship with her. But gradually he calms down, and reconsiders the situation quietly. Eventually logic and reasoning on the one hand, and his great love for her on the other, convince him that he should forgive her.

The characters, not only of this novel, but also of all 'Abdallāh's other works, are usually poor and lower middle class people, like those of Najīb Maḥfūẓ in his earlier realistic works. But there is a difference

(1) *Shams al-Kharīf*, p. 155.

in the way the two authors treat their characters. Whereas those of Maḥfūz are realistic and behave in accordance with their environment, those of ʻAbdallāh are romantically idealized, usually good-natured and self-sacrificing, and often appear as the innocent victims of society. "I sometimes blame society," says the author, "when it treats these good-natured characters unjustly, and does not recompense them for their virtues"(1) These characters moreover are very emotional and weep easily They weep from sadness, from joy, or when they are moved by the generosity of others This may be because the author himself is easily moved,(2) yet this excessive weeping sometimes irritates the reader.

Such emotionalism reminds us of Manfalūṭī's work. Indeed ʻAbdallāh's world is very similar to that of Manfalūṭī both in its concern with ethical and social problems, and in the nobility and sentimentality of their characters. ʻAbdallāh's world, however, is more sophisticated and more realistic, probably because of the drastic changes which have occurred in the cultural and literary scene since the time of Manfalūṭī.

ʻAbdallāh resembles Manfalūṭī also in the great care he gives to his style, which is somewhat elaborate. For him, unlike Sibāʻī, good style is an essential part of his writing, and he has commented that a work of art without good style is like dancing without music.(3)

As already mentioned above, it was these two writers, ʻAbdallāh and Sibāʻī, who consolidated the position of the romantic novel in the late forties and early fifties, and by their constant literary production

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(1) The quotation is taken from an interview with the author for the Egyptian Broadcasting Corporation, the script of which was kindly sent to me by the author.

(2) In the same interview the author mentions that some writers become sad when they hold the pen, and says "I am one of this type" The reason for this goes back to his childhood when he was always worried by his sick mother, so much that "I would sit distracted at school, hiding my tears . I always imagined that I would lose her, and I lived as if I were a child without a mother until I was fourteen when I came to Cairo to finish my education I lived with the family of one of my relatives where I experienced isolation and loneliness, and even something like orphanhood All this was kept in my sub-conscious until the time came and it was imprinted upon my characters"

(3) This comment was made in the above-mentioned interview

established a substantial trend. Before that only a few good romantic novels had appeared, some of which have been discussed above, and they were often the first attempts of authors who later turned to other types of novel. Even towards the close of the period covered by this study, the romantic trend had not reached the peak of its development; however Ihsān ʿAbd al-Quddūs, who began his career as a novelist only after 1952,[1] has joined ʿAbdallāh and Sibāʿī, and these three writers are mainly responsible for the present popularity of the romantic novel.

(1) For this reason none of his works are discussed here.

II

THE HISTORICAL TREND

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The historical trend had its beginnings, like the romantic trend, in the popular fiction produced in the eighteen nineties and early nineteen hundreds in imitation of European novels; in this period perhaps only Zaidān's historical romances are worthy of mention.

The subsequent development of this trend owes much to the political situation in Egypt during and after the First World War and to the growth of Egyptian nationalism. After the end of the War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which many had hoped would assist Egypt against the British, it became clear that the Egyptians would have to rely on their own efforts to win independence. The subsequent revolt in 1919, and Britain's abolishment of the protectorate in 1922, followed by recognition of Egypt's absolute sovereignty in 1936, all went hand in hand with an increase of self-confidence and the growth of Egyptian, as opposed to Arab, nationalism.

In this atmosphere some writers, the most important of whom was Salāma Mūsā, endeavoured to draw the attention of Egyptians to their national heritage, emphasizing the splendour of the civilization of the Pharaohs, their ancestors. Moreover, public awareness of Egypt's great past was increased by the archeological discoveries which were being made.(1) Under the influence of this tendency, some novelists chose to write on themes taken from Pharaonic history. Other writers meanwhile were trying to give expression to the Egyptian personality in a different way: short stories, for example those of Maḥmūd Taimūr,(2) depicted the Egyptian peasants and lower classes, and were full of "local colour"; plays had themes taken from the everyday life of ordinary Egyptian people and were written in colloquial

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(1) For instance, the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb in 1922.

(2) See for instance Taimūr's *al-Shaikh Jum'a wa Aqāṣīṣ Ukhrā* (1925) and *al-Shaikh Sayyid al-'Abīṭ wa Aqāṣīṣ Ukhrā* (1926).

Egyptian; even songs about fishermen, peasants, and so on became very popular. The new feeling of national pride and hope is perhaps best expressed in the sculpture *Nahḍat Miṣr* (Egypt's Rebirth) which now stands in front of Cairo University: the work represents a peasant woman standing with her hand on the shoulder of an awakening Sphinx. The influence of this increasing national self-awareness can be seen thus in the emergence of a more realistic type of short story characterized by its "local colour", and also in the development of the realistic trends of the novel.(1)

The evolution of the historical trend however, although influenced by this same "Egyptianism", as can be seen from the number of historical novels with Pharaonic themes, was also affected by another tendency, and that was the increasing desire on the part of many Egyptians, particularly those of the more conservative older generation, to emphasize the importance of Egypt's Islamic and Arab culture. For this reason, some authors turned to Islamic and Arab themes for their novels, and this second branch of the trend flourished especially in the nineteen forties with the spread of Arab nationalism, which led to the foundation of the Arab League.

Historical novels of both groups gave both authors and readers an opportunity to escape from the unpleasant reality of Egypt at that time, and to take refuge in visions of their great past. A criticism of contemporary conditions can be seen in some of these works, as well as an attempt to encourage the people to emulate the great deeds of their ancestors in solving the country's problems. This is especially obvious in the historical works of Najīb Mahfūẓ, who criticized the social and political conditions of the country even more openly in his later realistic works, apparently realizing that he would not be endangered by this since it was the policy of the authorities to permit social criticism.(2)

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(1) This nationalistic atmosphere can be seen clearly in the first Egyptian realistic novel, Hakim's *'Audat al-Rūḥ* (1933), to be discussed later.

(2) What Professor Lwīs 'Awad said about the theatre could be applied to the novel. See his article in *Le Monde*, July 24th, 1964·"L'ancien régime trouvait dans le théâtre de satire sociale une arme politique antirévolutionnaire, c'est-à-dire la soupape de sûreté très utile pour apaiser la colère des 'bons' bourgeois."

The first good historical novel to appear in the period covered by this study was Muḥammad Farīd Abū Ḥadīd's[1] *Ibnat al-Mamlūk* (*The Mamlūk's Daughter*, 1926), which, although inferior to his later works, will be discussed in some detail here because of its importance in the development of the trend. Professor Gibb comments that this novel "does not seem to be in any sense dependent upon the type of historical novel written by Zaidan, and represents in some respects an advance upon him. The heroic element gives way to a more subdued realism and the story is not wrapped round historical events, but placed in a historical setting. . . The course of historical events is fitted naturally into the background, and not forced upon the reader's notice "[2]

At the same time, although *Ibnat al-Mamlūk* was the first novel of any importance to appear after the first publication of *Zainab*, it seems to have been entirely uninfluenced by Haikal's work, which is completely different both in subject and in style. Abū Hadīd's novel, written in an elevated style of classical Arabic, is about the struggle between Muḥammad 'Alī and the Mamlūks during the period 1804-1807. The plot can be outlined as follows:

Ḥūrīya, the daughter of the Mamlūk 'Umar Bey, lives with her father and stepmother in Bani Suef in Upper Egypt. One night she sees through her window a small boat sinking in the Nile, and she immediately sends some of her father's men to save the people on board. The only passenger turns out to be the young Arab 'Alī, a refugee from the Wahhābīs who killed his father and plundered his home. He was on his way to Cairo, the home of his father's friend, the popular political leader, al-Sayyid 'Umar Makram. 'Alī, when rescued, considers that he owes his life to the household. 'Umar Bey, for his part, is de-

(1) Abū Hadīd was born in 1893. He graduated from the Higher Training College for Teachers, and later received a B.A. from the Faculty of Law in Cairo University. He held various posts in the field of education, including that of Counsellor to the Ministry of Education, and after his retirement from government service, he held a similar post in the Libyan Ministry of Education. He contributed to such magazines as *al-Risāla* and *al-Thaqāfa*, and was editor-in-chief of the latter for several years He is best known for his historical novels, although he also wrote some books on history and some translations from English, including one of *Macbeth*. He died in 1967.

(2) Gibb, *Studies*, p. 300.

lighted to find that 'Alī's father was a friend of al-Sayyid 'Umar Makram, who is also his own friend. He gives 'Alī a room in the house and treats him as his own son.

As the political situation deteriorates in Cairo, 'Umar Bey is involved, and he is finally arrested by Muhammad 'Alī's soldiers. 'Alī is left as head of the household for some time, and later on he sets out for Cairo in an attempt to rescue his benefactor 'Umar Bey Luck, and the help of al-Sayyid 'Umar Makram, who is a close friend of Muḥammad 'Alī, bring him success after a journey full of adventures and difficulties.

Muḥammad 'Alī thinks highly of 'Alī and chooses him for a prominent position in his army. When the relationship between 'Umar Bey and Muhammad 'Alī takes a bad turn again, Muhammad 'Alī orders 'Alī to bring 'Umar Bey from his hiding place in the country. 'Alī obeys, but on the way back to Cairo he feels guilty and leaves 'Umar Bey to go free; however, just before his meeting with Muhammad 'Alī, he is wounded in a fight with three Mamlūks who were escaping after the attempted assassination of Muhammad 'Alī. He is placed under arrest, but 'Umar Bey offers to give himself up in return for his release. Muhammad 'Alī agrees to set 'Alī free, and accompanied by Hūrīya they go to see him, only to find him dying. Hūrīya sits beside him, he kisses her hand and breathes his last breath.

Although the novel is much longer than *Zainab*, the course of action runs smoothly and never becomes tedious. One feels however that a few of the events are out of place and unnatural, for instance the occasion of the *Maulid* (fair) which is held just in front of 'Umar Bey's house when he is in prison. The author has always told us that 'Umar Bey is liked and respected by all, and it is therefore rather surprising to find his neighbours, not to mention his daughter's fiancé Hammâm and even 'Alī, who is considered as his son, all enjoying themselves at the fair in front of his house. It seems that the whole chapter exists merely so that the author can describe 'Alī defeating Hammām in a game of *birjās*(1) while Ḥūrīya watches. 'Alī in fact wins in a most spectacular

(1) *Al-birjās* is a jousting contest of two rounds In the first one horseman pursues another and tries to strike him with a lance. If he does not reach him, he has lost the round. In the second round the horsemen exchange positions.

and improbable way: Hammām cheats and strikes 'Alī after they have passed the finishing line; 'Alī, not expecting the blow, almost falls but controls himself immediately and picks up a lance which happens to be lying conveninently on the ground. The spectators of course think that he was just leaning to pick up the lance. In the second round, 'Alī disdains to strike Hammām with his lance, but instead lifts him bodily from his horse and sets him upon his own.[1]

The action also depends sometimes on the element of chance, as for instance in the episode which describes 'Alī's journey to rescue 'Umar Bey. It is significant that the author entitles this chapter *"al-Aqdār"* (Fates).

In spite of such weaknesses in the action, the work is more realistic and better constructed than Zaidān's historical romances. Whereas in Zaidān's works the fictional part is often felt to be independent of the historical events, the description of which sometimes becomes rather wearisome, Abū Hadīd's novel successfully combines the story with historical events in such a way that the action holds the reader's attention right down to the tragic conclusion The author achieves this by an intelligent choice of characters. His heroine is the daughter of an important Mamlūk who takes part in public events, and is thus involved in Muḥammad 'Alī's struggle to destroy the power of the Mamlūks. The lives of the heroine and, in turn, of the hero 'Alī who looks on 'Umar Bey as his father, are therefore directly affected by the political events in which 'Umar Bey is caught up, and in this way the author is able to bring historical facts easily and naturally into the novel without making the reader feel that they are out of place.

Abū Ḥadīd is very accurate in his account of the principal historical events of the period and keeps to their historical sequence; however he does not succeed entirely in producing a vivid representation of Egypt in the time of Muḥammad 'Alī, perhaps because he fails to describe the daily life and behaviour of his characters in sufficient detail to evoke that period. Some incidents even seem anachronistic,

(1) *Ibnat al-Mamlūk*, pp. 104-116.

for instance the rescue of 'Alī by Ḥūrīya who displays her knowledge of first aid including artificial respiration.

One of the main faults of the novel is that the principal characters are "flat" in E.M. Forster's sense, i.e. they do not develop and their actions can always be anticipated by the reader. Both 'Alī and 'Umar Bey for instance are idealized types, and for this reason seem unreal. The author depicts 'Alī as a knight of medieval times. He is a good fighter, who defeats Hammām in the improbable way we have seen, and who can hold his own against the three Mamlūks who try to assassinate Muḥammad 'Alī He is a prudent man who does not set out to rescue 'Umar Bey before he has fetched 'Umar Bey's uncle by marriage to take charge of the family while he is away. He is a brave man who addresses Muhammad 'Alī on equal terms, and dares to say such things as "My heart does not harbour treachery, because I am afraid of nothing I neither fear nor desire. I only love and hate, my lord "[1] He is a loyal and honest man who sets his former benefactor 'Umar Bey free, and then does not run away but goes to Muḥammad 'Alī to confess his guilt and so puts his entire life in jeopardy. He is also a very romantic person who loves Ḥūrīya at first sight, yet, despite the fact that she is also in love with him, and that he is the head of the household for a long time, nothing immodest passes between them except when he is dying, when he dares to kiss her hand. He is in fact too good to be true. He is also a clever politician who understands thoroughly the conflicting trends of Egyptian politics at that time, and reaches a position of importance which enables him to associate with such prominent figures as Muḥammad 'Alī and 'Umar Makram.[2]

'Umar Bey, although one of the Mamlūks, who were notorious for

(1) *Ibnat al-Mamlūk,* p 376

(2) One is reminded of Sir Walter Scott's heroes as described by Ian Jack in the *Oxford History of English Literature*, vol. 10, pp. 188-9: "The hero of each book is a young stranger, usually of mysterious origins, who is visiting Scotland for what is actually or virtually the first time. (In 'Alī's case, substitute "Egypt" for "Scotland".) Sometimes he turns out to be a long-lost son and heir. He becomes involved in a complicated series of events, which may be connected with historical occurances. In spite of his youth and inexperience, he rapidly becomes a person of great importance "

their intriguing and treachery, is a straight-forward honest man who refuses to have any part in conspiracies. He is generous, kindly, and respected by all, peasants and prominent men alike, and he nobly gives himself up in order to secure 'Alī's release from prison. Perhaps the author would have been better able to evoke that period of Egyptian history had he made 'Umar Bey a type which embodied the qualities for which the Mamlūks were notorious; as it is 'Umar Bey, the only Mamlūk in the novel with whose life the reader is intimately acquainted, is typical not of a Mamlūk but of any good man in any age or place.

In dealing with his historical figures, Muhammad 'Alī for example, Abū Ḥadīd is faithful to historical facts, but as mentioned above he gives little detail about their everyday lives, and therefore they appear in the novel as the reader knows them from history books. The author sometimes however succeeds in revealing their characters through the action and the dialogue, and this gives them a more life-like quality.[1]

Abū Ḥadīd remarked in the introduction to *Ibnat al-Mamlūk* that the aim of the novel was to serve both his nation's history and his language,[2] and certainly the style of the novel is usually excellent, and is marked by its ease and clarity, the very qualities which Haikal's *Zainab* often lacks, although Abū Ḥadīd does perhaps make too frequent a use of rhetorical questions, and occasionally the dialogue is written in too classical a language.

In spite of *Ibnat al Mamlūk's* faults, it was undoubtedly the first good Egyptian historical novel. However, Abū Ḥadīd did not write any other novels until the beginning of the Second World War when he published *al-Muhalhil Sayyid Rabī'a* (*al-Muhalhil, the Chief of Rabī'a*, 1939?) a historical novel about Pre-Islamic Arabia He was perhaps influenced in his decision to resume this type of writing[3] by the publication in 1936 of Ibrāhīm Ramzī's *Bāb al-Qamar* (*The Moon Gate*),

(1) See for instance *Ibnat al-Mamlūk*, pp. 274-292, where many of Muhammad 'Alī's qualities are depicted very clearly through the dialogue in a natural manner.

(2) See introductory page to *Ibnat al-Mamlūk*.

(3) It should also be added here that in 1939 the publishing house Dar al Ma'ārif had asked Abū Hadīd to write for it, as he told me in a private conversation.

which will not be discussed in detail here as it was not one of the better historical novels, although the only one of any note which appeared between *Ibnat al-Mamlūk* and *al-Muhalhil*. Let it suffice to mention that the novel attempts to describe "the landmarks of history from Ṣan'ā' to Najrān, al-Ṭā'if, Mecca, Yathrib, the land of Thamūd, Jerusalem, Syria, Cairo and Alexandria in the days of the mission of the Chosen One, (i.e. the Prophet Muhammad) peace be upon him, depicting for the reader their social, political and religious conditions, and relating the events which took place in them."(1) The vast scope of this novel indeed is perhaps one of the reasons for its failure. The religious and educational purpose of the work is clear from the introduction in which the author calls for "Arab unity" as a basis for "our independence", and a return to the Caliphate in the "form of a league of alliance of Arab states and other Muslim states, so that we can revive the principle on which the Islamic state was founded."(2) This may explain the praise given to the novel by about a score of religious and educational leaders, which the author quotes after the introduction to the novel.

Whether or not Abū Hadīd was in any way influenced by this work, he began in about 1939 to write a series of historical novels of which four, *al-Muhalhil Sayyid Rabī'a*, mentioned above, *al-Malik al-Ḍillīl* (*The Straying King*, 1940), *Zinūbiyā* (*Zenobia*, 1941), *Abū 'l-Fawāris 'Antara* (*Antara, the Greatest of the Knights*, 1946), and *al-Wi'ā' al-Marmarī* (*The Marble Vessel*, 1951) appeared in the period covered by this study A comparison of these works with *Ibnat al-Mamlūk* clearly shows the increasing maturity of the author, and in *al-Wi'ā' al-Marmarī* he reaches the peak of his development. Briefly, these later works are increasingly realistic, the element of chance almost disappears from the plot, the hero is usually depicted as an ordinary man who has faults as well as good qualities, and the author makes use on a much larger scale of the psychological analysis of character, which is true to life in most cases

All this can be seen from the account given below of Abū Ḥadīd's novel, *al-Wi'ā' al-Marmarī*.

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(1) Ramzī, *Bāb al-Qamar*, Introduction p s

(2) *Ibid*, Introduction, pp. k and l.

The novel describes the life of the popular hero of the Yemen, Saif ibn Dhī Yazan, whose father has to flee in the battle against the invading Abyssinians (A.D. 525). His mother, Raiḥāna, is taken with her infant son as a prisoner to the victorious Abyssinian leader, Abraha, who falls in love with her, and marries her. Abraha treats the baby Saif as his son. Twenty years later, while Abraha is away fighting the Quraish, Saif discovers the truth about his father. When Abraha is defeated and dies, Yaksūm, his eldest son by an Abyssinian woman. succeeds him, and illtreats Saif, his mother Raihāna, and Khuyalā', the girl Saif loves. Hitherto Khuyalā' has been treated as a respected member of Abraha's family, but now she finds out that she is only a slave girl, and has been inherited by Yaksūm. She escapes by deciding to become a nun. As for Saif, he is forced to leave Ṣan'ā' when Yaksūm discovers that he is plotting to drive out the Abyssinians and to win back his ancestors' kingdom in the Yemen. He is hunted by Yaksūm's troops from one place to another until finally he seeks aid from Kisrā Anushirwān, King of Persia. With the help of some of Kisrā's troops and the Arab tribes who support him, Saif is able to fight the Abyssinians. His half-brother, Masrūq, who has succeeded Yaksūm, is killed in the final battle. Thus Saif ends the rule of the Abyssinians, and receives homage from the Arabs of the Yemen.

The novel is without doubt the best of Abū Hadīd's works. Here the defects found in his earlier works disappear, and the writer's maturity is shown in almost every aspect of it Not only does the action flow coherently and naturally without improbabilities or coincidences, but it is also presented in a dramatic way. Events and actions are introduced in dreams, dialogue, soliloquies, memories, and so on. For instance, scenes from Saif's childhood appear in a long dream,(1) the political situation in the period before Abraha's conquest of the Yemen is described in the reminiscences of an old bedouin, who comes with other delegations to pay homage to Abraha, and is reminded of past times by the sight of the inner hall which has not changed since the time of Dhū Nuwās, the last of the Arab kings,(2) and the story of Khuyalā''s love for Saif, as well as some information about her life, is

(1) *al-Wi'ā' al-Marmarī*, pp. 34-7.
(2) *Ibid*, pp. 49-59.

introduced in a long soliloquy.[1] This method of presenting the background of the work is not commonly found in Abū Ḥadīd's earlier novels, and indeed some of the descriptive passages in his other works read like historical text books.[2] Not only this, but the author prepares the reader for the climax of the novel's action, the battle in which Saif finally defeats the Abyssinians and kills his half-brother Masrūq, by introducing the legend of the *jinniya* (female demon) and Ḥassān ibn Tubba'. Ḥassān was said to have been sent by his dying father, one of the great kings of the Yemen, to learn the future from the *jinniya* who lived in the cave of Mount Yanūr. She offered him a cushion stuffed with scorpions to sit on, bones to eat and blood to drink, and when he refused, she ordered him to kill the first person he met on his return to the palace, for if he did not, he himself would be killed by that person. This was the only way he would be able to come into possession of his father's kingdom. He dismissed the prophesy as nonsense, especially when he found that the first person he met was his brother 'Amr. The *jinniya's* prophesy came true, however, and eventually 'Amr killed Ḥassān This legend, told to Saif by his old uncle Shaikh Abū 'Āsim in the same cave,[3] foreshadows what will later happen, that is, that Saif will have to kill his brother in order to gain power

The novel abounds in well-drawn characters. There is Raiḥāna, a type of character not commonly found in Arab fiction, a woman who, after her husband has fled when his people are defeated, has to marry his victorious enemy. The marriage makes her so unhappy that she calls her first son by Abraha *Masrūq*, the stolen one. In time, she accepts Abraha's love, especially as he is so kind to Saif, her son by her first husband, that he encourages everybody to call him Saif ibn Abraha. After Abraha's death, her stepson, Yaksūm, drives Saif out into the desert and holds her almost a prisoner in the palace. When Yaksūm dies, the struggle continues, now between her two sons Masrūq and Saif, and the battle ends, as it must, with the death of one

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(1) *al-Wi'ā' al-Marmarī*, pp 19-31.

(2) See for instance *al-Malik al-Dillīl*, pp. 35-6 and 156

(3) *al-Wi'ā' al-Marmarī*, pp 164-5. Abū Ḥadīd had translated Shakespeare's *Macbeth* more than ten years before the publication of this novel, and the similarity between the story of the *jinniya* and the scene of the witches in *Macbeth* is clear.

of them. All these are shattering and psychologically complicated experiences, which require great skill and insight on the part of the author if he is to portray them in a convincing manner. Abū Ḥadīd has proved that he lacks neither the skill nor the insight. The following quotation may suffice as an example. It is part of the dialogue between Saif and his mother Ra'hāna, after the decisive battle in which Masrūq is killed: 'She said, "Now I have learnt what the future had in store for me, and I can meet my end peacefully."

'Saif said consolingly, "I wish it had not been my brother who came to meet me (in battle), but it was the fates which set us face to face."

'She said quietly, "You are enough (for me), Saif."

'He then said "Take courage, Mother, if I could have protected him from death, I would have, but what is inevitable is inevitable. There was no escaping from the death of one of us."

'She said, "Time has taught me this, my son. It has taught me to be content with what happens, if what I would be content with does does not happen; more than this, it has taught me that the terrors of the fancy are worse than the terrors of reality. Do you think that I grieve for Masrūq?"

'Saif said consolingly, "I know that you have a noble heart."

'She said, "I do not want to lie to you at our first meeting. I have lied to you enough during my life. (She refers here to her telling Saif that he was Abraha's son) I feel that my heart has died within my breast. I do not feel joy, I do not hope, I do not worry. I meet the bringer of good news, as I meet the bringer of bad news."

'She looked down in silence for a moment fingering a shining red stone hung on a golden chain around her neck, and said, "Are you surprised to hear that from me? Then be surprised, Saif, and do not pity me, for I do not want anyone, even my son, to have pity on me. I feel no grief."

'Saif moved uneasily, and she went on, "Life, death, misery, suffering, despair, hope are words the meanings of which I do not know. Abū Murra, (Saif's father) Yaksūm, and Masrūq are all images in my imagination as if I did not know their actual beings, or as if I had

never seen them. Time has deprived me of all it gave me, even the curse I used to suffer. Now, I have no forebodings or apprehensions. Leave me, Saif. I feel weak."

'Saif put his hand on her coarse white hair, as he used to when it was black and luxuriant, and said with compassion, "Let these cares leave your heart, mother. You have suffered for so long."

'She replied with a trembling voice, "I wish I could feel care filling my heart. Yes, I wish that something would fill my heart, even care. This would be kinder to me than this desolate emptiness which terrifies me, as if I were a ghost in a tomb, a tomb!" '(1)

Abū Hadīd shows here that his main concern, more than ever before, is not only to depict historical events but also to portray the human and psychological situations leading to them and resulting from them, which is the proper aim of a historical novelist.(2) This technique is not found to so great an extent even in novels written a comparatively short time before, such *al-Malik al-Ḍillīl*, and *Abū 'l-Fawāris 'Antara*

Besides Raihāna, there are a number of other characters who are worth mentioning. There is Khuyalā', for instance, who is brought up as a member of Abraha's family, and passionately loves Saif, who returns her love. When she discovers later that she is only a slave girl, and has been inherited by Yaksūm, she decides to follow the advice of Raihāna to become a nun. Thus she has to sacrifice her love for Saif When Saif becomes a king, he visits her convent to persuade her to leave and marry him, but she refuse . Khuyalā" s counterpart is Ṭulaiba, the Arab girl who is like "a wild cat", and who lives with Saif like "Eve with Adam" during the period in which Saif is forced to wander in the desert. When Saif becomes king, she too decides, from a typical bedouin sense of independence, that "she cannot bear to be a queen." The two women thus refuse a position of power for widely different reasons. Then there is Abraha, with his quick temper which he always regrets later, his inclination to use peaceful means in dealing with others, and his cunning which enables him to win over the Arabs of the Yemen until his death after twenty years of control. These

(1) *al-Wi'ā' al-Marmarī*, pp. 320-322.

(2) George Lukàcs, *The Historical Novel* (English translation), p. 42.

characteristics are depicted in several incidents, and are also indicated by the way the Arabs react against Yaksūm's different conduct when he succeeds his father. In order to secure power, Yaksūm disregards all human or ethical considerations, an attitude which the people resent, and which results in the ending of the Abyssinian rule in Yemen. There is also Abū 'Āṣim, the experienced old Shaikh, who reflects the author's views about life and people, and who, because of his age and relationship to the queen and her son, Saif, as well as to the tribes, is able to throw light on most situations.

Finally, there is Saif, the hero, who is brought up in the palace of the man who defeats his father and virtually owns his mother, who was brought to him as a prisoner. Despite the kindness of Abraha towards him, Saif suspects that he is not his son. As a child he always felt "a wall" between them. 'He could not remember a single day when he rushed into his arms as his brother Masrūq and his sister Bisbāsa used to do. He would say to himself even when he was a child, "How can I rush into his arms as if I were a child." '(1)

Saif is therefore tormented by doubts until in the end he dares to ask his mother whether he is really Abraha's son. His mother, in one of the best chapters of the novel, assures him that he is Abraha's son, for she knows the grave consequences which would occur if he knew the truth. Soon afterwards, however, Yaksūm confronts him with the dreadful truth, when he pushes him away from the priest as he is about to receive the blessing, and brings forward his half-brother, Masrūq, saying, "Abraha's son is more deserving." From this moment Saif leads a harsh life in which he struggles perseveringly until he ends the Abyssinian dynasty in the Yemen.

The way in which Saif is drawn shows clearly how Abū Ḥadīd's conception of a hero has developed since he wrote *Ibnat al-Mamlūk*. The difference is great between the character of 'Alī, the hero there, who is, as mentioned above, too good to be true, and Saif, who appears in every situation as an ordinary person with the qualities and abilities which, although not common, would be necessary for any leader who achieves what Saif does.

Abū Ḥadīd's style reaches the peak of its development in this novel.

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(1) *al-Wi'ā' al-Marmari*, pp. 39-40.

He makes clever use of some classical expressions which help to create the proper setting, as, for instance, when Saif does not feel the passing of time, although "the sun had risen for two lances in the sky."(1) The language is rich in poetic similes and vivid imagery. The horizons in the early morning, for instance, "appeared in the subdued light sleepy and still, although they throbbed (sounding) like gentle waves in a clear lake."(2)

The last battlefield is described as follows · "Nothing remained of the signs of the battle except the debris which covered the foot (of the mountain), the remains of soldiers and horses, some fragments of weapons, congealed blood, and scratches on the ground. Masrūq was shrouded with his costly jewelled clothes, which were stained with a patch of dark blood. The sun had sunk towards the peaks of the bare mountains. The sea was still calm, as if it were a carpet of chrysolite, while the sun-beams of late afternoon were dancing on the crests of the languid waves, as if a dynasty had not been wiped out that day."(3)

Such description, which is not uncommon in the novel, shows that Abū Ḥadīd has the imagination of a painter.

It is natural that Abū Hadīd, who devoted his literary career almost entirely to historical works, is remembered whenever the Egyptian or even the Arab historical novel is mentioned. However, the only novel which he wrote since 1952, that is, *Anā 'l-Sha'b*, (*I Am the People,* 1954), is more of a realistic work which describes and criticizes the social conditions in Egypt before the revolution, and ends with the outbreak of the revolution itself as an answer to the country's problems.

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(1) *al-Wi'ā' al-Marmari*, p 46.
(2) *Ibid.*, p. 19.
(3) *Ibid.*, p. 316

ii

Muhammad Sa'īd al-'Iryān(1) has written a number of historical novels, the most important of which is *'Alā Bāb Zuwaila* (*On the Zuwaila Gate*, 1947). In this work 'Iryān shows that he is a more accomplished writer than either Jurjī Zaidān or Ibrāhīm Ramzī,(2) although his novels clearly have the same aim as theirs, that is to teach history in a modern and entertaining way.(3) These authors differ from Abū Hadīd, who in his best works takes history as a framework within which he devotes as much attention to human situations as to historical events.

The events which form the subject matter of *'Alā Bāb Zuwaila* are so numerous and so involved that it would be extremely difficult to summarize them. It will be sufficient here to say that the novel describes one of the most disturbed periods of Muslim Egypt, from towards the end of the reign of the Mamlūk al-Ashraf Qāitbāy up to the Ottoman conquest (about 1490 to 1517). Six sultans, none of whom died a natural death, ruled during this period, and many other important political figures, both Mamlūk and Egyptian, also came to an untimely end. The author succeeds in depicting this time of inter-factional intrigue and plotting in a life-like manner, and he portrays vivedly the greed of the Mamlūk ruling class and the injustices suffered by the Egyptian people who were crushed by confiscations and increasing taxation especially during the reign of Qānsūh al-Ghaurī (1501-1517) (4)

'Iryān contrives to connect and explain the numerous historical events in the period covered by the novel by attributing to the his-

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(1) 'Iryān was born in 1905 He graduated from Dār al-'Ulūm in 1930, and worked in the Ministry of Education, becoming eventually a Deputy Minister. He was an editor of the literary magazines *al-Thaqāfa*, *al-Risāla* and *al-Kātib al-Miṣrī*, he also founded and edited a children's magazine called *Sindbād*. Besides his historical novels, 'Iryān wrote some children's books and edited some classical Arabic works including *al-'Iqd al-Farīd*. He died in 1964.

(2) See above p. 52-53.

(3) See Zaidān's introductions to *Fath al-Andalus* and *al-Ḥajjāj Ibn Yūsuf* for instance, and Ramzī's introduction to *Bāb al-Qamar*.

(4) See for instance chapter 21, and also chapter 22, in which some criticism of contemporary Egypt and the royal family can be seen.

torical figures motives of love, enmity, ambition etc. to account for actions. The reader's interest is sustained not only by the dramatic political events of the time, but also by the imaginary sub-plot introduced by the author, which is not the conventional love story commonly found in historical novels. This sub-plot is the story of how Ṭūmānbāy, the last Mamlūk sultan, was kidnapped as a child in the Caucasus and taken to Syria where he was sold as a slave to Qānṣūh al-Ghaurī. Qānṣūh treats Ṭūmānbāy as a favourite even though he finds out that he is the son of Arkamās with whom Qānsūh had been waging a blood-feud, and whom he now believes to be dead. Arkamās however is not dead, and in the great battle of Marj Dābiq in Syria, when the Ottomans defeat the Mamlūks, he manages to kill Qānsūh. Meanwhile Ṭūmānbāy's mother has set out on a search for her lost son, and, after a difficult journey of many years, meets by chance her husband Arkamās who is returning to Egypt after killing Qānsūh al-Ghaurī. He realizes who she is, and learns from her that Ṭūmānbāy, now sultan, is his son, a fact of which he had previously been unaware as he had left home on his journey of revenge before Ṭūmānbāy's birth. Without revealing his identity to his wife, who has not recognized him, he takes her to Cairo to help her meet her son. Ṭūmānbāy however is defeated by the invading Ottomans and publicly hanged on the Zuwaila Gate before his mother has an opportunity to see him.

Although this sub-plot contains some moving incidents, 'Iryān seems to have been handicapped by the problem of combining historical characters like Qānsūh al-Ghaurī and Ṭūmānbāy with a fictitious story about Ṭūmānbāy's parents. This gives rise to some unconvincing situations. For instance, in the novel, Ṭūmānbāy is shown as longing to see his mother, yet he never makes any attempt to bring her to Egypt or even seek news of her, although this would have been possible for one of his rank and power. Similarly, although Arkamās, after his arrival in Cairo with his wife, speaks to Ṭūmānbāy several times, he never tells him that he is his father and never arranges for him to see his mother. Presumably this is because the author, with his attention to historical accuracy, does not wish to introduce a moving reunion between Ṭūmānbāy and his long-lost parents as it is not recorded historically.

This shortcoming, however, does not detract from 'Iryān's success in representing vividly such a confused period in Egyptian history. The novel *'Alā Bāb Zuwaila* puts 'Iryān in a class above his predecessors Zaidān and Ramzī, as mentioned above, not only because of his flowing and eloquent style, but principally because of his ability to bring history to life, and his skill in presenting historical situations through the dialogue and the action.

iii

The poet ʿAlī al-Jārim[1] wrote a number of historical novels, almost every one of which centres on the life of an Arab poet, for instance ʿUmāra al-Yamanī (*Sayyıdat al-Quṣūr, The Lady of the Palaces,* 1949), Mutanabbī (*al-Shāʿır al-Ṭamūḥ, The Ambıtıous Poet,* and *Khātimat al-Maṭāf, The End of the Story,* both published in 1947), and the ʿUmayyad Caliph and poet al-Walīd ibn Yazīd (*Marah al-Walıd, The Joys of al-Walīd,* 1948). As one might expect, Jārim describes not only the lives of his heroes but also the historical background. Although the action is sometimes well presented and there are some good psychological descriptions, these works are mediocre on the whole, the principal reason for this being perhaps that the author's efforts in the main have been directed towards a combination of his subject's life history with a series of anecdotes such as are found in classical Arabic works on biography and literary history, and his own creative contribution to them is slight. Since most of his heroes are famous poets, the Arab reader is already acquainted with their life histories, and he finds before him a collection of anecdotes which he has already read elsewhere. Indeed he sometimes feels that he is reading, not a modern novel, but a classical work like *al-Aghānī*. This feeling is increased by Jārim's style which hardly differs from that of classical authors: his writing is full of conventional similes, clichés and archaic vocabulary which is sometimes explained in footnotes.

To judge from Jārim's works, it would seem clear that if a historical novelist is unable to offer the reader a new interpretation or a fresh presentation of well-known situations and figures, it is probably wiser for him to have recourse to less familiar subjects, so that at least the

(1) Jārim was born in 1881 in Rashid (Rosetta). He graduated from Dār al-ʿUlūm in Cairo, and spent some years in England studying psychology and education. After his return, he taught at Dār al-ʿUlūm and later became its Vice-Dean. From 1934 until his death in 1949, he was a member of the Academy of the Arabic Language Jārim was best known as a poet, and, like Bārūdī, Ḥāfiẓ and Shauqī, belonged to the traditional school of poetry. Towards the end of his life he wrote several novels and translated some English works.

novelty of the subject may arouse the reader's interest.[1]

Jārim had more scope for his creative ability in his novel *Ghādat Rashid* (*The Girl from Rosetta*, 1945). This is the story of Zubaida, a girl from one of the principal families of Rosetta. She is told by a fortune teller that she will become a queen, and dreaming of this, she refuses to marry her cousin Mahmūd who is in every way a suitable match and whom she loves. Then General Jacques Menou, one of Bonaparte's officers, comes to Rosetta as governor. He decides to marry, and when Zubaida is suggested to him as a suitable wife he asks for her hand She of course agrees, hoping that somehow her dream will be fulfilled Although Menou has become, nominally at least, a Muslim, the marriage is regarded as a scandal by the Egyptians, and Zubaida's father, unable to hold up his head, flees to Cairo where he is eventually killed fighting the French. When Menou returns to Paris he takes his wife and their son with him, but Zubaida is very unhappy especially as her husband begins to treat her badly, and after six years she runs away leaving her son behind, and returns to Egypt. She finds that her cousin Mahmūd, who married Laura, the daughter of a British merchant, has been killed fighting the British. She goes to visit his grave and finds his wife there mourning him. The novel ends with the discovery of Zubaida and Laura dead together on Mahmūd's grave.

Although in this work the historical episode chosen — General Menou's marriage to an Egyptian girl — is not one very familiar to readers, and Jārim had plenty of opportunity to develop his theme imaginatively, yet the result is not appreciably more successful than his novels about famous poets The main faults of this work are the unrealistic treatment of the subject and the author's tendency to force his personality and his language on all his characters. The following example will serve to illustrate this. It describes the emotions felt by Zubaida after her marriage to Menou, which has been the ruin of her family. Her grief-stricken mother has come to visit her and asks her how she is. Zubaida answers: ' "Do you ask about my condition,

(1) Even some of Abū Hadīd's novels, *al-Muhalhil*, *Abū 'l-Fawāris 'Antara*, or *al-Malik al-Ḍillīl* for instance, suffer from the reader's familiarity with their heroes.

Mother? Do you really wish to know? Then listen: I was on board a ship with my family and loved ones, whose conversation was smiles, and whose intimate talk was love, and there they enjoyed spiritual bliss and physical delights in repose and plenty, and laughter which comes from their hearts not from their mouths, and love which lips cannot express, as if the world had been created for them alone, and happiness shone only upon them. They abolished time, there was no night nor day, they abolished thought, there was no fear nor wariness, they abolished jealousy, there was no spite nor deceit. While this heavenly ship clove the waves proudly and arrogantly, and ran (its course) with the billows playing around it, and its wake streaming behind, kissed by the waves, suddenly there arose a violent storm as frantic as madness, as destructive as death It lifted the sea high and hurled it down, lifted it and hurled it down, as if the sea were a ball in the hands of a mighty giant. Soon the ship broke up, Mother, and was smashed to pieces I was horrified and terror seized me, I forgot prudence, judgment and wise action Weak, I held tightly to a piece of the ship, and the waves tossed me with it on to an island on which were trees and rivers But the fruit of its trees was bitter, and the water of its rivers was poison It was deserted by the human race except for one creature with strange features, who came to win my friendship and take me as a wife As for my family and loved ones they were scattered to the four winds, and I was left alone on this accursed island with this strange creature This is my state, Mother, what is yours?"

'"I was one of the passengers on this ship, and I was cast up upon another island, on which there was no human being, but which was crowded with the beasts of worry and pain. As for your father, the waves have thrown him on a distant island to which we do not know the way"

'"And my cousin Mahmūd is on a fourth island. Oh Mother, will this scattered group ever meet? Will those days which were like a happy dream ever return?"

'"They will return when the storm has subsided, and the rough sea has calmed, and the ships sail again..."'[1]

(1) *Ghādat Rashīd*, pp. 118-119.

Although this language might be acceptable in a work on Mutanabbī or other classical figures, it is difficult to imagine an Egyptian mother and her daughter, at the turn of the 18th century, and in such a situation, speaking in this way. Such a pompous, verbose and involved style, which is hardly suitable for a novel, is not to be found on every page, but nevertheless occurs very frequently. This and the other weaknesses mentioned above make it difficult to class *Ghādat Rashīd* or any of Jārim's other historical novels among the best works of this trend, although they are very popular and have been republished several times.

iv

The novel *al-Thā'ir al-Aḥmar* (*The Red Revolutionary*, 1949) by 'Alī Bākathīr[1] is his most important in the period covered by this study. It is perhaps the best example of an attempt to solve a contemporary problem in the light of past history. The novel, the sub-title of which is "the story of the conflict between capitalism and communism in al-Kūfa", was written as a reaction against the communist activities in Egypt during and after the Second World War. It attempts to show how communist views, which were held by a number of Egyptians, prove inadequate in comparison with the principles of Islam if these are faithfully put into practice. Thus the novel indicates that the solution to the problems of the Egyptian and Arab world lies in the return to these Islamic principles.

The first words of the novel describe the hero Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ as follows: 'On the outskirts of the village of al-Dūr, one of the villages scattered around al-Kūfa close to the district of al-Baṭā'iḥ, at noon on a hot summer's day, Ḥamdān began to wipe the sweat from his forehead with his hand as he ploughed his field. One of his feet was on the ploughshare, while he sometimes lifted the other from the (hot) ground, and sometimes touched the ground with it. He held the halter of the ox which was plodding heavily before him, and with the whip in his right hand gently flicked the back of his dumb companion each time it stopped or slowed down. He seemed to be saying: "Dear ox, both of us are condemned to live in this misery; this is the whip in my hand, and it would hurt if it struck your back, so do not force me to use it." '

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(1) Bākathīr was born in Indonesia in 1910 to an Arab family from Haḍramaut. He went to Haḍramaut at the age of eight, and later to Aden where he learnt English He spent a year in the Ḥijāz, and there he wrote his first play, *Humām*. In 1934 he came to Egypt, where he lived until his death in 1969. He obtained his B A. from Cairo University, and while still an undergraduate he translated Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Bākathīr began his literary career at the age of thirteen by writing poetry. He wrote a number of novels, and many plays, among which is *Hārūt wa Mārūt* for which he was awarded a State Prize. He died in 1969.

The novel proceeds to describe the various kinds of injustice which are inflicted upon Ḥamdān and the rest of the peasants, workers and artisans. The injustice is not confined to the exploitation of these classes in return for trivial wages which are barely sufficient for them to live on. The landowners sometimes carry off their women, and rob them of their lands by treachery. Ḥamdān's sister ʿAlīya is kidnapped by Ibn al-Hatīm, a rich landowner, and Ḥamdān joins the ʿAyyārīn, a band of outlaws who rob the rich to help the poor, in order to take revenge and rescue her. ʿAbdān, Ḥamdān's cousin and ʿAlīya's future husband denounces Ibn al-Ḥaṭīm publicly and is forced to flee to Baghdad where he is persuaded to join the Ismāʿīlī movement. He asks Ḥamdān to help in spreading Ismāʿīlī propaganda. They win over many of the peasants and workers round al-Kūfa, and with their followers they occupy the district of al-Baṭā'ih. However, they are defeated by the caliph's brother, al-Muwaffaq, and forced to go into hiding until his death. Abū 'l-Baqā', a legal scholar (*faqih*), with the encouragement of the new caliph al-Muʿtadid, begins to work out a practical course of action for the application of the principles of Islam particularly among the working classes, and this makes them less susceptible to Ismāʿīlī propaganda Meanwhile Hamdān with the help of ʿAbdān founds an independent community in Muhaimābādh. The leader of the Ismāʿīlīya, al-Ḥusain al-Qaddāḥ, becomes suspicious of Hamdān's growing power and influence, and decides to depose him. As the conditions of the lower classes are now improving thanks to Abū 'l-Baqā''s reforms, Ḥamdān abandons the Ismāʿīlī movement, and allows his followers to offer their allegiance to the caliph.

In this way the novel traces the life of Ḥamdān from the time when he was a simple peasant up to the collapse of the community which he had founded within the boundaries of the ʿAbbāsid state It is a a long story which covers numerous events over a long period of time and a wide geographical area, and which enables the author to describe the various injustices suffered by the lower classes at the hands of landowners, employers, and government authorities. He also describes the obstacles put in the way of any reform by these upper classes who were influential in political matters. Even the religious leaders of the time acquiesced in the policies of the authorities, and avoiped involvement in any important issues. None of these problems differ

from those experienced in Egypt at the time when the novel was written. Moreover some of the principles of reform suggested by Abū 'l-Baqā' in the novel were put into practice a few years after the publication of the novel; see for instance Abū 'l-Baqā''s statement that "the authorities must fix a certain rent for any (given area of) land according to its fertility and value. The landowner may not ask for more than this."(1) This is similar to one of the articles of the law of agricultural reform which was enforced in Egypt after the revolution.

The author succeeds in introducing these problems, with both the communist and Islamic solutions to them, in such a way that they are part of the action. The following quotation may illustrate this. It shows Abū 'l-Baqā' refuting the Carmathian doctrines, when a worker consults him. Abū 'l-Baqā' first questions him about the Carmathian missionaries and the teaching which they are spreading among the workers. The worker replies : ' "(They teach) that property will be distributed among the people, and no man will own it more than another, and everyone does what he is good at to the best of his ability, and he is given what is sufficient for him and frees him from need according to the efforts he has made "

' "Have you joined their movement?"

' "I am still hesitating, and I heard people speaking well of you, saying that the Commander of the Faithful will follow your advice, so I thought I would see first what you had to say."

' "Nothing but what God has decreed God is most just and wise and knows best what is good for His creation. He created men by stages and enabled them to win their livelihood, and set some of them above others in this and assigned to every man his rights and enjoined justice and beneficence on them so that He could test which of them excelled in good works."

' "I know this, but what is due to the worker from the man for whom he works in God's religion? What is the share of each in the profits of the work?"

' "If you wish, I shall use as an example your position and that of the owner of the oil press for whom you work."

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(1) *al-Thā'ir al-Aḥmar*, p. 164.

' "That is good."

' "Your share of the profits is the amount which would recompense your efforts if the press were your property, and the owner's share is the amount which is equal to the rent of the press if he rented it to someone else, and besides that, he has what equals his efforts in the good management and supervision of the press, provided that (money for) worn or damaged machinery is set aside from all that. If this amount is not sufficient for you or for those whom you support, then the State owes you the poor-rate."

.... ' "Tell me, may God prosper you, about the worker whose employer no longer needs him, and does not find a job with another employer; what is he to do?"

' "He is entitled to the poor-rate, until he finds a job which he is good at." '[1]

However, the discussion of such problems and their solutions in this manner forms only a small part of the novel, which aims rather at portraying the injustices suffered by the people, and suggesting the Islamic principles which should be applied to remedy them through the characters' behaviour and the course of action.

The attempt to describe the many minor historical incidents which occur in different places at different times gives the novel a certain lack of unity, which contrasts it with, for instance, Najīb Mahfūz's *Kifāḥ Ṭiba*, to be discussed below. Perhaps for the same reason, the author fails to present his characters in depth. It has been said that even less care is given to the psychological portrayal of Ḥamdān, the hero, than to some other characters such as 'Abdān, Kirmānī and Ahwāzī.[2] This is not correct, for Ḥamdān is the only character whose thoughts and feelings are revealed to the reader, although it is true that this does not occur very often. On the other hand 'Abdān, Kirmānī, Ahwāzī and similar characters are seen only through their contribution to the action, and nothing is known about their emotions or their private lives. Characters like Rājiya, 'Alīya, and al-Ghaith, Ḥamdān's

(1) *al-Thā'ir al-Aḥmar*, pp. 167-8.

(2) Anwar al-Ma'addāwī, *Namādhij Fannīya min al-Adab wa 'l-Naqd*, pp. 238-9.

relations, are given attention only in so far as they throw light on the personality of Ḥamdān.

In *al-Thā'ir al-Aḥmar*, the author is to be congratulated more than anything else on his skill in bringing to life an eventful and little known period of Islamic history. In this respect the novel is similar to 'Iryān's *'Alā Bāb Zuwaila*, with the difference that in the latter, the author deals mainly with the ruling classes and their comparatively limited outlook, whereas Bākathīr is more concerned with the people, particularly the working classes, and therefore gives a much fuller picture of the social conditions of the age.

V

Several examples of historical novels which have Arabic or Islamic themes have been examined above, to complete the picture of the historical trend we will now discuss some of the novels based on subjects from Pharaonic history.

Najib Mahfūz[1] began his career as a novelist by writing three historical works on Pharaonic themes, the first of which, *'Abath al-Aqdār* (*The Mockery of the Fates*, 1939), is similar to Abū Hadīd's first historical novel *Ibnat al-Mamlūk* It is full of improbabilities and coincidences, and the hero is faultless and has every conceivable good quality like 'Alī, the hero of *Ibnat al-Mamlūk*, he is too good to be true Yet the novel contains the first indications of an artistic talent which is feeling its way The psychological descriptions of characters are realistic and convincing, even while the situations in which the characters find themselves are unlikely The author's powerful imagination enables him to describe battle scenes which are completely lifelike This ability is even more developed in his third and best historical novel, *Kifāh Tība* (*The Struggle of Thebes*, 1944)

Mahfūz's second novel *Rādūbis* (*Radopis*, 1943) is about the life of the Pharaoh Merenra, of whom the historian James Baikie says "Nothing is known of his reign, which according to Manetho lasted only for one year Manetho also tells us that he was succeeded by a queen, Nitokris . Herodotus tells us a story of how the brother of Nitokris (i e Merenra) had been murdered."[2]

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(1) Najīb Mahfūz was born in 1912 and graduated in 1934 from the Department of Philosophy of the Faculty of Arts in what is now Cairo University. His study of philosophy and psychology has greatly influenced his writing, and his early command of English has enabled him to read many Western literary and philosophical works Soon after he left university, he began to write articles on philosophy as well as some short stories, and since that time has published a number of novels and collections of short stories He has held several governmental posts and is now Counsellor to the Minister of Culture

(2) James Baikie, *A History of Egypt*, vol I, pp. 185-6.

It would seem that Maḥfūẓ chose such a little-known Pharaoh so that he could turn his life story into a criticism of King Fārūq. The novel shows that Merenra is a lustful, irresponsible and greedy Pharaoh, whose only concerns are his love affair with the beautiful dancer Radopis, and the appropriation of temple lands, so that he can spend extravagantly on his pleasures. His queen Nitokris, in her turn, reflects Queen Farīda who was loved by the people for her kind and honest behaviour, while Khnumhotep, the prime minister who enjoys great popularity but loses the king's confidence and is replaced by an unpopular minister, resembles Nahhās Pasha. Some chapters, if the names were changed, would read like a description of the political situation in Egypt under King Fārūq.

Although *Rādūbis* is in every respect a much more developed novel than its predecessor, *'Abath al-Aqdār*, Mahfūẓ owes his fame as a novelist to his third historical novel, *Kifāh Tība* When the novel was first published in 1944, the literary critic of the magazine *al-Risāla*, Sayyid Qutb, began his review of it as follows, "I try to be reserved in my praise of this novel but an overpowering enthusiasm for it, and a sweeping delight at its appearance, carry me away. This is the truth, and I should make this clear to the reader from the first line, in the hope that this revelation may help me to restrain my headstrong enthusiasm and to return to a critic's calmness and impartiality." At the conclusion of the article the critic had this to say · "If I had the authority, I should make this novel available to every girl and boy, I should publish it and distribute a copy of it to every home free, and should give for its author, whom I do not know, one of those countless parties given in Egypt in honour of the deserving and the undeserving."(1)

The novel describes how the Hyksos, who have occupied Lower and Middle Egypt, conquer Upper Egypt and occupy its capital Thebes (*Ṭiba*) after the defeat and death of Seknunra, the grandfather of Ahmose. The small army which has been prepared secretly by Seknunra is unable to resist the numerically superior army of the Hyksos with their war-chariots. The Egyptian royal family flee to Nubia where they spend ten years supervising the manufacture of new armour, ships,

(1) Quṭb, *Kifāh Tība, al-Risāla*, Oct. 2nd, 1944, pp. 889-892.

war chariots and weapons. After these years of preparation, Ahmose, disguised as a merchant, visits the Hyksos leaders, and by offering them gifts of gold and jewellery from Nubia, persuades them to open the borders between Nubia and Egypt for trade. Ships are now able to sail to Egypt with merchandise, and return to Nubia with men hidden in them to be trained for the army. When a sufficiently large army has been trained, Kamose, Ahmose's father, advances to drive out the Hyksos. After a victorious battle he is inspecting the enemy dead when a wounded soldier shoots and kills him. Ahmose takes his father's place, and continues the campaign until the Hyksos are expelled from Egyptian soil.

A sub-plot is introduced into the novel This is the story of the love of Ahmose for Mandaris, the daughter of the Hyksos king Abofis. Ahmose meets her accidentally during his first journey to Egypt as a merchant, a journey which contains some improbable incidents and is on the whole more romantic than realistic Ahmose experiences a conflict between duty and love, and finally he is forced to send Mandaris, who has been taken to him as a prisoner, back to her father. Her father has agreed to the withdrawal of his people and the release of thirty thousand Egyptian hostages, partly in exchange for her release. Thus the Pharaoh has to sacrifice his love although he wins a great victory for the people.

One of the achievements of the novel is the admirable descriptions of the defeat, and later the victory of the Egyptians. These show the first signs of Mahfūz's objectivity, which is more developed in his later works, and which distinguishes him from almost all other Arab novelists. The course of the battle is usually seen from both sides' point of view. This can be seen in the following quotation, which describes the defeat of the Egyptians with their unprepared army under Seknunra: 'The King then ordered an attack of twenty chariots in five units. They swooped down like savage eagles and stimulated the field to new life. Abofis, however, decided to return a severe answer to Seknunra's new assault and sent to the field twenty units, each five chariots strong They shook the earth with their thunder and filled the air with mountains of swirling dust. The battle blazed and blood flowed in rivers. Time advanced and the fighting did not abate or slacken until the sun was in the centre of the sky. Then some men of the reconnaissance

party came to tell the King of the retreat of the Hyksos fleet after two ships had been captured and another sunk. The news of the victory came in time to strengthen the determination of the Egyptians and give them courage. The officers spread the news among the fighting troops and those who were waiting to fight. It had its joyful effect in men's breasts, and enthusiasm flared up in their hearts. This news, however, struck Abofis' ears and fury seized him. Immediately he changed his plan of slow action and gave the order for attack and revenge to the chariot force.

'The battle went on until mid-afternoon, when it became obvious that victory was on the side of the Hyksos. They then prepared to strike the finishing blow. A big chariot guarded by a strong force, and driven by a courageous warrior with a long beard and snow-white skin, charged at Seknunra's chariot, and broke through the ranks towards it with extraordinary bravery. The King realised the intention of the bold warrior and hastened towards it. They exchanged two fearful thrusts with their spears, but each received the blow directed against him on his shield, and prepared to fight. Seeing his opponent draw his sword, Seknunra knew that he was not content with merely trying his luck. He drew his own sword and rushed at him. At this grave moment an arrow struck him in the forearm. His hand trembled and the sword fell from it. Many of the King's bodyguard cried out: "Take care master, take care." But his opponent hastened upon him before he could guard himself, and aimed with all his force a terrible blow at his neck. The blow found its target, and an expression of agony appeared on the dark face. Overpowered, he ceased to resist. His enemy grasped a spear in his right hand and threw it strongly. It impaled itself in the King's left side. Immediately he swayed, dazed, and collapsed on the ground. Shouting rose on every side, the Egyptians cried: "Oh Lord, the King has fallen, protect your King."

'The enemy leader shouted with a triumphant smile, "Finish off the mutinous rebel, do not spare a single one of his men."' (1)

What sets this novel apart from most other historical works is that it does not neglect or deal only superficially with the human problems

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(1) *Kifāh Tiba*, pp 45-47. See also the long realistic description of the fighting around Thebes, pp 164-194.

and the emotions expressed by the characters, as is the case in even the best works of al-'Iryān and Bākathīr, neither does it enlarge on them at the expense of the historical situation as occurs sometimes in Abū Ḥadīd's works. The emotional and the historical elements are well-balanced here. Besides the depiction of historical events, there are several human situations which are excellently described. Examples are the occasion when the royal family receive the news of the defeat and death of Seknunra and have to flee to Nubia, and the conflict between love and duty experienced by Ahmose.

The novel is also superior to the works of 'Iryān and Bākathīr in that it deals with one single historical situation, the struggle of Upper Egypt to expel the Hyksos, and this gives it unity. Not only this, but whereas the events described by 'Iryān and Bākathīr — the declining years of the Mamlūk Empire on the one hand, and the spread of Carmathian doctrines on the other — are not such as can arouse any feelings of national pride, Maḥfūẓ's subject is a victory of which he as an Egyptian can be proud, and this, as pointed out by George Lukács, is of great importance in the creation of a real historical novel.[1]

(1) G. Lukács writing on Sir Walter Scott comments, "He is a patriot, he is proud of the development of his people. This is vital for the creation of a real historical novel." See *The Historical Novel*, p. 53.

A work which is of less importance than Mahfūẓ's *Kıfāh Ṭiba*, but also worth mentioning in a discussion of historical novels with Pharaonic themes, is Muḥammad 'Awad Muḥammad's[1] *Sınūḥi* (*Sinuhe*, 1943).

In this novel, the narrator Sinuhe relates how he joins the entourage of Ani, the nephew of the Pharaoh Amenemhat. Ani's wife Nura, who hopes to make her husband Pharaoh, conspires to assassinate Amenemhat while his son and designated successor Senosret is away on a military expedition. The plot, of which Ani himself knows nothing, is unsuccessful, and the conspirators, including Nura's sister whom Sinuhe loves, flee to Libya taking Sinuhe to accompany them. Sinuhe is completely unaware of the attempted assassination, and only finds out about it on his return. The Pharaoh realizes his innocence and forgives him for his part in the conspirators' escape. Sinuhe later joins Senosret on the Libyan borders where he remains in charge of the army whenever Senosret is absent. On one raid, Nura's sister is brought to Sinuhe among the Libyan prisoners, and because of his love for her, he releases her. This, coupled with his former association with the conspirators, rouses Senosret's suspicions of him, or so Sinuhe feels at least. Therefore when Amenemhat dies and Senosret succeeds him as Pharaoh, Sinuhe flees to Palestine. Eventually the new Pharaoh, impressed by Sinuhe's loyalty in exile, sends him a message asking him to resume his life in Egypt as one of its ministers.

The plot of the novel as outlined above is combined with the description of the achievements of the Pharaoh Amenemhat, his creation of an orderly kingdom and his campaigns to restore order on the west-

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(1) Muḥammad 'Awaḍ Muḥammad was born in 1895 He graduated from the Higher Training College for Teachers in 1920 and obtained his Ph.D. from London in 1926. Besides *Sınūhı*, he has written some very important geographical works, among which is *al-Sūdān al-Shamālī* (*Northern Sudan*) for which he was awarded the State Prize for Social Sciences in 1952, and he has translated some English and German works, including Shakespear's *Hamlet* and *Henry V*, and Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* and the first volume of *Faust*.

ern, southern and eastern borders, as well as the founding of a new capital in the eastern Delta, which shows the Pharaoh's interest in architecture All this is described by Sinuhe, as well as by Amenemhat himself in his testament to his son. Here the author follows closely the text of the Egyptian document containing Amenemhat's testament,[1] and similarly, the final chapter of the novel, in which Sinuhe tells of his journey to Palestine, is more or less a translation of the well-known Egyptian story of *Sinuhe*. The novel even attempts to reproduce Sinuhe's style of writing as displayed in this story[2] It can be seen thus that the author's creative contribution to the work is not very great

Sinuhe himself appears as an agreeable but emotional person, the key to his character is the advice given to him by his father: "You do not lack intelligence You were assured of an abundant share of it when it was decided that you would be my son. You are intelligent, quick to understand, there is no doubt about it. But I fear you are one of those who are moved by their emotions and are inclined (to follow) their desires If you are faced with a question about which you should make a decision, you do not let your reason alone weigh up every consideration and assess every possibility. No, you accompany it by your inclinations and desires, the question becomes confused for you and you lose your way"[3]

Perhaps because of the attractive personality of Sinuhe, the novel has the pleasant air of a fairy tale, but it cannot be regarded as a profound study of a character or of an age.

(1) This testament is described by Baikie as "a thoroughly human piece of writing". See Baikie, *History*, vol. I, p 275.

(2) A translation of a considerable portion of it by C.W Goodwin is given in S. Birch's *Records of the Past*, vol. 6, pp. 131-150, and here Sinuhe's writing is seen to be humorous and full of repetition and synonyms

(3) *Sinūhī*, p. 13.

vii

Ikhnaton, the hero of 'Ādil Kāmil's[1] *Malik min Shu'ā'* (*King of Rays*, 1945), is a controversial figure. "That he was a great man is a position which is scornfully denied by quite a number of present-day scholars, and quite as vigorously maintained by even a greater number. To some he appears as nothing better than a hopelessly unpractical and incompetent doctrinaire, who, for the sake of theories which were not even original and have not even the spirituality which is claimed for them, threw away an empire, and sacrificed the lives and the loyalty of better men than himself To others, he has something of the halo which surrounds a man who made himself the martyr of a great idea, and sacrified life, and what is more precious than life, for the sake of his convictions, and as the ideas for which he is supposed to have stood are those which for the time are in favour of the modern world, it is the latter party which at present has the most chance of prevailing."[2]

'Ādil Kāmil holds the views of the second party. This is clear both in the novel itself, where Ikhnaton is treated as a prophet, and in the introduction, in which the author gives Ikhnaton unqualified admiration and quotes similar praise by such historians as Petrie, Breasted and Weigall.

The novel is a biographical one, and its main theme Ikhnaton's life and religion, but a considerable amount of space is given to the intrigues between Ptahmose, the chief priest of Amon, and Ikhnaton's mother, queen Tiy, who worships the god Ra and who is the actual ruler of the country as her son is too feeble and unworldly to exercise any authority. Ikhnaton finally announces his new religion, and the struggle to curb the power of Ptahmose and the priests of Amon grows even fiercer. The Asiatic colonies rise in revolt as a result of the unrest stirred up by Aziru, an agent of the Hittite king, who takes advantage

(1) 'Ādil Kamil was born in Cairo in 1916 He graduated from the Faculty of Law in what is now Cairo University and became a lawyer He has written only *Waika 'Antar* (*Shame on you, 'Antar,* 1944), a play, and two novels, *Malik min Shu'ā'* and *Mallim al-Akbar*, both of which are discussed in this study.

(2) Baikie, *History*, vol 2, pp 229-230

of the confusion in Egypt, and the priests of Amon support the revolt secretly to worsen the critical situation of the Pharaoh. Ikhnaton persists in refusing to declare war, as pacifism is one of the principles of his religion. Eventually he is deposed and dies two days later.

The author skilfully manages to combine information about the historical background with his account of the intrigues in such a way that the work takes the shape of a novel rather than a biography, and the reader's interest is sustained by the atmosphere of suspense and mystery. This concern with the plot is obvious also in the author's realistic novel, *Mallim al-Akbar*, to be discussed later.

However, the characters are not sacrificed for the sake of the plot. The author shows how Ikhnaton as a child is intelligent, meditative and fond of beauty, and has full opportunity to indulge the play of his fancies in the royal palace at Thebes with its fantastic paintings, beautiful gardens and great lake One morning for instance, after watching the sun rise as usual and listening to the "music of morning", he sees on the parapet 'a column of ants crawling their eternal course, carrying their assorted plunder, but there was one ant, lagging behind the procession, left at the side of the path as if her companions had forsaken her. They approached her only to whisper to her that eternal secret which every ant must confide to every member of her race she meets before going on her way. The boy spoke kindly to the abandoned ant, "Why have you been left behind, sister?" He saw that she had put down her load by her side and was pushing it for a few steps then resting beside it Soon he realized that his ant friend had two injured legs which prevented her from joining the column. The attempts which she was making to continue her journey with her load made the thin boy's heart bleed He began to search until he found a dry leaf, placed the wounded ant upon it with great care, picked up her tiny load for her, and dropped it near her. Then he set them down at the side of the nest to which the column was going. The ant climbed down from the leaf, hesitating and fearful, for she knew her way only when it was uninterrupted. But soon the passwords were exchanged between her and the crowding multitude which was entering and leaving the gates of the city quickly and busily. Soon she became assured of her way and approached the city.' (1)

(1) *Malik min Shu'a'*, p. 20.

Ikhnaton as he grows up becomes increasingly withdrawn and given to meditation until he is utterly indifferent to life, even to his sweetheart Nefertiti. We see him shouting at his friend, Smenkhara, 'in a manner which betrays a frightful inner crisis, "Who told you that I have lost my belief in life, and become a dry stick, crushed by the feet of animals. Tell me where did you learn this truth?" '[1]

Later on he bursts into tears during a long argument with his father and says, "This happened a year ago, father, when the values of life were shattered in my eyes, and I never again understood anything about them. The change was sudden, I awoke one morning and I had lost my faith completely. Today I find nothing on which I can rely I move forward upon the waves of life with no aim and no hope. I eat with those who eat, I sleep with those who sleep, I laugh with those who laugh, without finding my true self in any of these situations."[2]

He withdraws from all his friends and begins to devour religious works and to study the history of every Egyptian god, comparing them and meditating on their validity When he feels that future reading is useless, he turns to art in the hope that he may find some escape there. He makes his artists depict the human figure with a new realism, not in the conventional stylistic way, but this too fails to give him any relief "He became more convinced as time passed that he must first solve his inner problem, or else life would be meaningless."[3] He is later haunted by the thought of suicide. Even at night he sits alone on his balcony reciting verses in which the poet expresses his hatred of life and his yearning for death.[4]

All these experiences are characteristic of Wilson's "Outsider"[5] It is very probable that 'Ādil Kāmil himself had passed through similar crises, and made use of his experiences in the depiction of his

(1) *Malik min Shu'ā'*, p. 46.

(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 50-1.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 82.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 85.

(5) See for instance pp. 15, 67, 84-5 and 202 in Colin Wilson's *The Outsider*, which was published 12 years after Kāmil's novel.

hero. Najīb Maḥfūẓ remarked in an interview[1] that he and 'Ādil Kāmil and another friend of theirs were extremely pessimistic, and that they resembled the characters of Camus before their author created them. We know also that 'Ādil Kāmil gave up writing entirely after his second novel, because of this extreme pessimism and the loss of his belief in any values

At any rate Ikhnaton survives this crisis. One day he feels a trance-like state coming over him, his ears ring, the sweat pours from him, and his blood runs swiftly. Thoughts flash through his mind without any association. "This tree may fall at any moment. . . What does resignation mean? Smenkhara has an odd way of talking. O people, by my life, you are hypocrites .. hypocrites . .What delicious bread I ate . . . "[2] The Pharaoh becomes his normal self again to make a "wonderful discovery which delights him". He can now see a profound connection between all these unassociated images "There appeared to his understanding a single thread linking all the conflicting ideas of the world, and he realized that this single thread is the secret of existence which is latent in every creature regardless of its form."[3] From this time he is no longer an "outsider". On his way back to the palace, "he searched within the depths of his heart for the sources of his misery and found no trace of them."[4]

Revelations come to him again and again until a religion comparable to Christianity[5] is evolved In reading about these revelations we are reminded of the descriptions of the way in which the Prophet Muhammad received his revelations. This suggests that the author may have made too obvious a use of these traditional accounts in describing the physical effect on Ikhnaton.

The feeble and cynical king who had left everything to his mother, and had even tried to renounce the throne, now exercises all his

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(1) Fu'ād Dawwāra, *Riḥlat al-Khamsīn ma'a 'l-Qirā'a wa 'l-Kitāba*, *al-Kātib*, Jan 1963, p. 21.

(2) *Malik min Shu'ā'*, p 98 Perhaps this is the first sign of the use of the "stream of consciousness" in an Egyptian novel

(3) *Ibid*, p. 99.

(4) *Ibid*, p. 100.

(5) See Weigall, *The Life and Times of Akhnaton*, pp. 101-127.

powers as a Pharaoh with exceptional vigour, until at the end of the novel, in a moving scene, he realizes on his death-bed that the cause for which he has struggled all his life, and for which he lost his throne, is doomed to complete failure. He says to his wife, after all his friends have abandoned him, "You and Smenkhara are all that remains to me on earth." When she tries to comfort him by saying that he will always be remembered in history, he smiles ironically, "Do not speak to me of history. It may describe this work which you praise as the most foolish action I have ever committed in my life."[1]

Besides Ikhnaton there are several characters worth mentioning. There is his mother, Queen Tiy, who wants only to live in an atmosphere of intrigue and conflict. For some, she might not seem life-like, especially as she admires her enemy, Ptahmose the chief priest of Amon, and spares his life when she has the opportunity to get rid of him, in order not to lose a worthy opponent in her intrigues. Yet she is an interesting personality, and it should perhaps be remarked here that Kāmil likes to depict "unusual" people, whom one might conceivably meet in real life. This tendency can also be seen in his other novel *Mallim al-Akbar.*

Ptahmose is another unusual character. He is a cunning, malicious and greedy man, who despite his deadly enmity with the royal family, seizes the opportunity of meeting the Queen alone after her husband has died, and, in one of the best chapters of the novel, declares his life-long love for her and proposes to marry her, thinking that he would be able to take the place of her son. For Ptahmose the ends always justify the means, and later he even encourages the rebels against the empire, since this will enable him to overcome his enemy, Ikhnaton.

There is also Nefertiti, Ikhnaton's beautiful wife, who is the first person to believe in his new religion and who remains loyal to him until his death. Even when the dying Pharaoh, driven to despair by his failures, seems to waver in his faith, Nefertiti's own faith is strong and steady. She is at his side to comfort him, and encourages him to reassert his belief in Aton.

It can be seen from the above discussion that while 'Ādil Kāmil

(1) *Malik min Shu'ā'*, pp. 200-201.

takes care to elaborate historical incidents into a plot which will sustain the reader's interest, his prime concern in *Malik min Shu'ā'* is the development of Ikhnaton's personality rather than the depiction of social conditions or historical events, as is the case in Bākathīr's or 'Iryān's novels, and he has succeeded admirably in his psychological study of a controversial historical figure.

To sum up, the historical trend received especial stimulus from the growth of Egyptian and Arab nationalism, which encouraged authors to write on themes illustrating the greatness of their past. The trend reached the peak of its development during the nineteen forties, and since that time has steadily declined. Novels on Pharaonic subjects have disappeared, and while a few works on other historical themes were published during the nineteen fifties, they are unimportant in comparison with the many realistic and romantic novels which have been written.

III

THE REALISTIC TREND

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The realistic trend, although slow to gain popularity in comparison with the romantic and historical trends, has become the most important of all three in recent years. As seen above, the realistic trend came into being in the nationalistic atmosphere of the nineteen twenties and thirties, which led writers to try to give expression to the Egyptian personality by writing on themes presenting the everyday life of the Egyptian peasants and lower classes. Writers like 'Īsā 'Ubaid criticized the tendency of most authors to depict the beautiful and the ideal, and said that this was hampering the development of the new Egyptian literature, which must be based on the portrayal of life as it was without exaggeration, i.e. on realism.(1)

Although the earliest realistic works were short stories, it was not long before writers began to attempt novels of a realistic type.

The first to appear was Taufīq al-Ḥakīm's(2) *'Audat al-Rūḥ* (*The Return of the Spirit*), published in 1933. The title of the work, as the quotations at the beginning of each of its two parts suggest, was inspired by the myth from the *Book of the Dead*, which tells of the murder of the god Osiris and how his sister Isis gathers his scat-

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(1) 'Īsā 'Ubaid, *Iḥsān Hānim*, pp 7-8.

(2) Ḥakīm was born in Alexandria in 1898. He received his B.A. in law from what is now Cairo University, and in order to continue his legal studies went to Paris, where however he became more interested in literature and spent most of his time reading and going to plays, concerts and museums When he returned to Egypt, he worked as a prosecuting attorney (*wakīl niyāba*) in the country for five years. He has held various governmental posts and in 1950 was appointed Director General of the Egyptian National Library. He has written novels, short stories, essays and plays, and is recognized as the leading Arab dramatist at the present time More than twenty of his works have been translated into other languages and some of his plays have been acted in Europe.

tered limbs and summons his soul to return to the dismembered body so that he may come to life again. The scattered limbs symbolize disunited Egypt, and the "return of the spirit" the national spirit which was revived by the revolt of 1919 under the leadership of Sa'd Zaghlūl.

The story of the novel can be summarized briefly. Muḥsin, the son of a rich farmer and a pupil at a secondary school in Cairo, lives with his uncle Ḥanafī who is a schoolmaster. In the same household are Ḥanafī's middle-aged spinster sister Zannūba, his younger brother 'Abduh, who is training to be an engineer, and his cousin Salīm, a police captain, who has been suspended from his job because he took advantage of his official position to make advances to a Syrian lady. Their neighbour is the doctor Aḥmad Ḥilmī, whose daughter Sanīya uses various pretexts to get a chance to see the three young men next door. When Muḥsin is introduced to Sanīya by his aunt Zannūba, she says that she is impressed by his voice and asks him to give her singing lessons. On another occasion, Sanīya asks for someone to repair an electrical fault, and Zannūba sends 'Abduh, the budding engineer. On yet another occasion, Sanīya says that her piano is broken, and Zannūba offers the services of Captain Salīm who has a harmonica and is musical. All three are attracted to Sanīya; each selfishly wishes to have Sanīya to himself and begins to feel suspicious of the others. Sanīya in her turn falls in love with Mustafā who lives in the same building as Muḥsin and his family. Zannūba had herself hoped to marry Muṣṭafā and does her best to try and break up the relationship between him and Sanīya; her efforts are unsuccessful however, and eventually they get married. Muḥsin, 'Abduh and Salīm are equally disappointed when they realize that Sanīya loves Muṣṭafā, they forget their jealousy and mutual distrust and sympathise with each other in silence.[1] Then when the political leader Sa'd Zaghlūl is exiled, the revolt of 1919 breaks out, and they forget their disappointment in love by throwing themselves with enthusiasm into the national struggle for independence.

The chief character is the young Muḥsin, in the portrayal of whom the author has clearly drawn on his memories of his own child-

(1) The return of the spirit of brotherly love to the family here reflects the "return of the spirit" to the Egyptian nation as a whole.

hood and adolescence. Muḥsin is an intelligent, likeable young man, and so sensitive that he feels ashamed of the wealth which sets him apart from his school-fellows: he even tries to avoid going home in the carriage which is sent to collect him every day, as he does not wish to embarrass his poorer friends. His love for Sanīya is sympathetically depicted, and the author manages to give a "wonderful picture of the torturing love of adolescence".(1) Sanīya herself is a typical example of an educated upper-middle class girl at that time. She rarely goes out and kills time by reading novels and playing the piano. Although she has no opportunity to move in mixed society, she succeeds in taking advantage of the ignorance and naivety of Zannūba, and, as seen above, has her young neighbours sent to her home on various pretexts. Zannūba, another important character, shows the effect of city life on an ignorant country girl. She assumes a Cairene accent, and adopts the city fashions in her dress, yet her knowledge of city ways remains superficial: she greets her friends with "Bon soir" in the middle of the morning, for instance,(2) and spends the housekeeping money on charms to bring her a husband. Zannūba plays a major role in the novel; through her, Muhsin, 'Abduh and Salīm meet and fall in love with Sanīya, yet at the same time she is in a way responsible for frustrating them all, for it is as a result of her attempts to draw Muṣṭafā's attention to herself that Sanīya first becomes aware of him. Indeed all the characters reveal various aspects of their personalities in response to Zannūba's shortcomings. Of the remaining members of Zannūba's household, there is Ḥanafī, who is downtrodden, 'Abduh, who is quick tempered but good-natured, and the pretentious Salīm, who arouses laughter whenever he appears.

'Audat al-Rūḥ describes the daily life of a middle-class Egyptian family at the end of the First World War, yet although this period was a critical one in the development of the country as a whole, there is no mention in the novel of political events or the struggle for independence which occupied the minds of so many Egyptians at the time. The revolt of 1919 is introduced only at the end of the novel as a means of distracting the young men from their disappointment in love. The

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(1) Nevill Barbour, *'Audat al-Rūh, Islamic Culture*, vol. 9, 1935, p. 488.

(2) *'Audat al-Rūḥ*, part 1, p. 17.

scope of the work thus is limited to the small world of the family, and Ḥakīm is very successful in giving a humourous and vivid picture of their everyday life. The course of action runs smoothly as the events develop one from another in a natural and convincing way, and the author never has recourse to the element of chance or the improbable incident which appear so frequently in the earlier romantic novels. Ḥakīm does however occasionally insert passages dealing with subjects which are irrelevant to the action, such as the description of the Sudan,[1] and the conversation between the English irrigation inspector and the French antiquarian, who believes that the Egyptians are the heirs of a great civilization, and are capable of achieving greatness again once they find the right leader.[2] Although this passage partly explains the title of the novel, it is in no way connected with the rest of the action. A further example is Muhsin's lengthy reminiscences about his singing teacher Shakhla'.[3]

The author indirectly makes some criticisms of Egyptian society in the work, but these criticisms are not forced upon the reader's attention in such a way that they interrupt the course of action The most important example of this is the way the author criticizes the belief in magic and charms, still widespread among a large section of the population, by making Zannūba's behaviour in this respect seem ridiculous to the reader.

'Audat al-Rūh has many strong points as a novel. Ḥakīm has a great sense of humour which is apparent in nearly every chapter, and an admirable capacity for using the dialogue[4] not only to reveal the thoughts and feelings of his characters, and to develop the action, but also as a means of introducing the characters. This enables him to evoke the right atmosphere and start the action moving in a few lines, as for example at the beginning of the novel where almost all the characters are introduced through the dialogue in a few pages. Ḥakīm's skill in this respect is the more understandable when one remembers that he is essentially a playwright.

(1) *'Audat al-Rūh*, part 1, pp. 259-274
(2) *Ibid.*, part 2, pp 54-64.
(3) *Ibid.*, part 1, pp. 146-177.
(4) The dialogue is always in colloquial Egyptian which is also used by the author occasionally in the narrative.

'Audat al-Rūḥ is indeed the first Egyptian novel which can sustain comparison with Western works. As Nevill Barbour says, it is "well up to the standard of literary workmanship of the West. In this respect, it marks a distinct advance in modern Egyptian literature."[1] Moreover, Ḥakīm's work is worthy of note, like Haikal's *Zainab*, because of its importance in the general development of the novel. Its great success undoubtedly helped to raise the prestige of the Egyptian novel, which was then still in its early experimental stages, and encouraged other authors to write their first novels, some of which have already been discussed above.

Hakīm's *Yaumiyāt Nā'ib fi 'l-Aryāf* (*Diary of a Prosecuting Attorney in the Country*, 1937), which was based on the author's own experiences as a prosecuting attorney (*wakīl al-niyāba*), exposes the injustice and corruption of the legal system as applied in the countryside. Although the novel is inferior artistically to *'Audat al-Rūh*, it demonstrates even more clearly than the latter work Ḥakīm's skill in presenting his criticisms of Egyptian society in an amusing and satirical way. A few examples of the author's approach will suffice here.[2] The following passage for instance draws attention to the inability of the illiterate peasant to understand the Code Napoléon.

'"The case is rejected on technical grounds, your Honour the accused, as the appeal was presented too late." The peasant, clothed in a *'ury*,[3] did not understand such talk, and said, "What am I to do then, your Honour?"

'"The previous sentence of imprisonment must be carried out. Take him into custody, constable."

'"Unjust imprisonment your Honour ? I'm wronged. No judge has heard my case. Up till now the authorities have not questioned me!"

'"Shut up! Your appeal was presented too late."

'"Well, what then?"

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(1) Barbour, *'Audat al-Rūh*, *Islamic Culture*, vol. 9, 1935, p 488

(2) Apart from a few alterations where I thought necessary, the following quotations are taken from A.Eban's "*Maze of Justice*", a translation of the novel.

(3) A loose garment usually worn by dervishes and the very poor.

' "Look here, the law gave you a limit of three days."

' "Your Honour! I am a poor man. I can't read or write. Who is going to explain the law to me and read me the dates?"

' "It seems that I have been too patient with you. You ass, you are supposed to know the law. Take him into custody, constable."

'The man was put amongst the prisoners, looking right and left at people around him to see whether he was the only one who did not understand. And I began to study for a moment the face of this creature who was presumed to know the code Napoléon.'[1]

Another of Hakīm's criticisms is that too often essentials are sacrificed for the sake of formalities:

"I always like to draw up my legal reports carefully and to arrange them logically For the report is everything in the eyes of higher authorities, and it is the only testimonial bearing witness to the accuracy and skill of the legal officer, whereas the arrest of the criminal is a matter about which no one is questioned." The narrator goes on to describe everything very accurately and in full detail. "Yes, we did not even forget the draw-string of the pants, and the way it was twisted. Mention of small details is a proof of accuracy and care. In this way we learned to make our investigations from our revered forerunners. I remember that I once left a wounded man in the throes of death, and began to describe his pants, draw-string, slippers, and skull-cap, and when I had finished and leaned over the wounded man to ask him who had attacked him, I found he had expired."[2]

On another occasion the author indicates the officials' lack of integrity and the way they abuse their public position for the sake of private advantage: 'Everybody hurried off — the clerk, the sergeant, and the prisoner, tied on to a chain behind his guard as if he were a dog. They all ran after the trotting judge. This was a familiar spectacle to the villagers on the days of these sessions, since late appeals and orders for the renewal of imprisonment were always examined and signed in the station buffet two minutes before the departure of the

(1) *Yaumīyāt*, p. 90, *Maze of Justice*, pp. 60-61.
(2) *Yaumīyāt*, p. 18, *Maze of Justice*, pp. 6-7.

train. The train would start moving while the judge still had one foot on the platform and the other in the last compartment, saying, "Appeal rejected and imprisonment of the accused to continue." The clerk would record this judgment on the marble table of the buffet, while the judge received the baskets of eggs, butter and meat from the usher Sha'bān who came sprinting behind the moving train, shouting at the top of his voice, "The meat is fillet steak and entrecôte, Sir." '(1)

Ḥakīm uses as a framework for his diary the case of the beautiful peasant girl Rīm, whose brother-in-law has been murdered. This thread of interest runs through the whole work connecting the chapters, and it is this which makes the work a novel rather than a diary. The separate incidents are perhaps not always quite so closely connected as they might be, but the liveliness and humour of the scenes tend to make one forget this. The use of the diary form however has its advantages, for the author is able not only to present a large variety of unrelated situations and problems, but also to comment as he wishes without this seeming unnatural to the reader.

There is no profound characterization in the novel; on the contrary, Hakīm has taken care to depict his characters as types rather than individuals, so that his criticism can apply to any official in any part of the Egyptian countryside.

Hakīm thus manages to present a picture of appalling corruption, yet he presents it in so humourous and ironical a manner "that the reader forgets the idea of reform which led Hakīm to write, and even wishes that everything in this collection of people could remain as it is, so long as it is enjoyable and funny."(2)

Hakīm's two later novels '*Uṣfūr min al-Sharq* (*Sparrow from the East*, 1938) and *Himār al-Ḥakīm* (*Hakīm's Donkey*, 1940) both suffer immensely from their lack of unity. The first work contains the story of Muhsin's unsuccessful love affair with a French girl in Paris, where he is a student, side by side with lengthy discussions between Muhsin and Ivan, a Russian worker, about the spirituality of the East as

(1) *Yaumīyāt*, pp 91-92, *Maze of Justice*, pp. 61-62.

(2) See *Yaumīyāt Nā'ib fī 'l-Aryāf*, *al-Risāla*, Nov 27th, 1939, p. 2212 (Some information about the translation of the novel into French.)

compared with the materialism of the West. That Ḥakīm is here describing his own experiences in Paris is clear from his autobiographical work *Zahrat al-'Umr* (*The Flower of Life*, 1943). The central theme of of *Ḥimār al-Ḥakīm* is the conflict experienced by an author because of the pressure laid upon him by a contract which he is obliged to fulfil, although his artistic nature is reluctant to submit to any external pressure. This theme however is combined with a collection of various other subjects which have no bearing on the course of the action, for instance the narrator's opinion on the development of the countryside in France in comparison with Egypt, how he was once about to marry, and the superficiality of the modern woman in Egypt.

A better constructed and more successful work is Ḥakīm's *al-Ribāṭ al-Muqaddas* (*The Sacred Tie*), published in 1944. The author's humorous approach, so characteristic of his first novels, disappears here completely, perhaps because of the nature of the subject.

The critic Sayyid Quṭb wrote in *al-Risāla* that he had expected Hakīm to repeat himself in his novels with some modifications here and there, but this illusion vanished while he was reading *al-Ribāṭ al-Muqaddas* "Here is a new horizon . . a new note, a new perfume — that is the perfume of maturity, the note of perfection, and the horizon of mastery in the subject, the treatment, the style, and in all the criteria by which a work of art is judged "[1] The critic goes on to say that there were some indications of this maturity in Hakīm's earlier works, but they were just the first signs in comparison with the "perfect maturity" which we have in *al-Ribāṭ al-Muqaddas*. Eloquent and, to some extent, true as his assessment is, he does not support it by a detailed analysis.

The novel can be summarized as follows. *Rāhib al-Fikr* (the votary of thought), who is a writer, receives a letter from an unknown woman who wishes to visit him and learn from him how to appreciate literature. He meets her and finds to his surprise that she is neither old nor ugly as he had anticipated. After a few visits he discovers that she is married, as her husband calls to thank him for stimulating his wife's interest in literature by the books he has written. He realizes at the same time that the wife's visits to him had taken place without the

(1) Quṭb, *al-Ribāṭ al-Muqaddas*, *al-Risāla*, Dec 18th, 1944, p. 2010.

husband's knowledge, and therefore feels bound to stop seeing her. However he misses her so much that he writes letter after letter to a vision of her. After about a year, he meets her husband by chance at a hotel in Helwan, and when he asks after his wife, the husband gives him a red notebook, and asks him to read it and give him his advice. He is shocked to find that the notebook is written by the wife, and that it describes in full detail how she committed adultery with a film star. Eventually he mediates between the husband and wife, who are divorced quietly without anyone knowing the grounds for the divorce.

Besides the main action, there is a sub-plot: the husband's cousin, a colonel in the army, is first chosen by the husband to mediate between him and his wife, but when the colonel reads the red notebook he begins to suspect his own wife, who is also mentioned in the book He falls a prey to doubt, and finally commits suicide.

The novel serves principally to illustrate Hakīm's opinion of the modern Egyptian woman.[1] These views are expressed usually through the husband, who describes his wife as, for example, "the frivolous girl who knows nothing but the dress-maker, the cinema, horse-racing, tennis, the car, the hairdresser, and make-up . . This ignorant girl of sham education whose conversation is no more than a few French phrases which she stammers out in an ugly way whenever she is forced to. This poor, deluded girl who thinks that she is modern, because she knows how to put the lipstick between her fingers."[2] The husband also speaks of "this wife, like many other wives, of superficial and affected culture, which shines from the surface, but in its essence is concerned only with the trivial things of life."[3] It is because of this false conception of modern life that the wife commits adultery, for she imagines this kind of behaviour to be sophisticated. She is most surprised to find *Rāhib al-Fikr* so reactionary that he thinks

(1) Hakīm expresses his views also in *Himār al-Hakīm*, referred to above, and in a short story called *Madrasat al-Mughaffalīn* (*The School for Simpletons*) which was published in *Qiṣaṣ Taufīq al-Ḥakīm* (1949). The modern woman is also the subject of some of his plays. For this reason Hakīm has become known as *'adūw al-mar'a*, "the enemy of woman".

(2) *Al-Ribāṭ al-Muqaddas*, pp. 61-2

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 183.

adultery could result in divorce, when many of her married friends boast of having more than one lover.

But there is more to the novel than this. Hakīm here presents the sensible reaction towards the infidelity of a wife. It must be remembered that, even today, if a man is a peasant from Upper Egypt for instance, or one of the working classes where behaviour is controlled by emotion rather than by reason, he may kill his wife on the mere suspicion of adultery The husband in *al-Ribāt al-Muqaddas*, however, is carefully chosen by the author as a man who comes from a well-to-do upper-class family which can afford to send him to England to complete his education. As we learn from the meetings of the wife and the husband with *Rāhib al-Fikr*, and from the wife's account of him in the red notebook, he is respectable, widely read, broadminded, upright and sensible. Therefore when his wife betrays him, he is naturally shocked and grieved, but does not lose control of himself or commit any action he might later regret. He considers the situation carefully and calmly, and comes to the conclusion that although his personal honour is irretrievably damaged, he can still preserve his daughter's honour and future career by concealing his wife's infidelity from others. He therefore decides to divorce his wife secretly, and to bring the child up according to his own principles.

Hakīm does not express his opinions directly in this work, as he does in *Ḥimār al-Hakīm*, but they spring from the action of the novel, and this is one of the reasons for the novel's success. Yet even here the last chapter, where *Rāhib al-Fikr*, somewhat like a belated chorus, explains everything including the moral aspect, might well have been omitted without impairing the novel, as well as the long letters which the same character writes night after night to the vision of the wife. By means of these letters however, Hakīm is able to pursue his favourite habit of digression; and we are edified with the good qualities and deeds of the wives of Karl Marx, Osiris and Disraeli, as well as of Khadīja, the Prophet's wife. Each wife's story is told in one letter, which except in the case of Khadīja, usually ends with such phrases as: "Thus Isis, the wife, acted, and thus you would have acted if you had been in her place, because, my dear friend, you have the same heart, I do not doubt this for a moment, the same heart from which springs all this

love and sincerity."[1]

The characters of the novel are for the most part well drawn and life-like, although one feels that the behaviour of *Râhib al-Fikr* himself is sometimes exaggeratedly romantic for a mature and supposedly sensible man. A withdrawn and bookish bachelor, he becomes infatuated like any teenager with an attractive woman whom he has met only a few times. After he has discouraged her visits, one finds him suffering from insomnia and writing these long letters to a dream image of her, and after reading the red notebook given to him by the husband, he spends a terrible night "sitting sleepless until dawn without changing his position". He was not aware of himself; nor did he perceive anything around him; "his tears and laughter were so intermingled that it was difficult to separate them."[2] Moreover, he reaches this state of mind, not out of sympathy with the poor husband, but because of his own calamity. "All kinds of thoughts came to his mind, except one thing which he completely forgot . . . that was the husband who gave him the notebook. For his own disaster had distracted his attention from the husband's."[3]

In other parts of the novel, however, the feelings and thoughts of *Râhib al-Fikr* are portrayed more convincingly, as for instance when he waits for the wife to tell her the husband's conditions for divorce, contrasting his present feelings with those he had previously had. The comparison, when she enters, between his two different attitudes towards her beauty, once like a flower, but now dangerous since he knows of her infidelity, is one of the best passages Ḥakîm has written.[4]

The wife is skilfully and sympathetically depicted. The author certainly draws attention to her weaknesses: her ignorance and her superficiality for instance, yet he allows her to present her opinions and justify her behaviour in a very persuasive way. In other words, although the wife is clearly blameworthy in the novel, the author is not biased against her, still less is he devoid of compassion for her.

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(1) *al-Ribâṭ al-Muqaddas*, pp 100-101.

(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 178-9.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 179.

(4) *Ibid.*, pp. 219-223, 224-5.

Another interesting though less credible character is the colonel, the husband's cousin, who is a decisive and straightforward man; yet because he has no proof that his wife is unfaithful and at the same time cannot convince himself of her innocence, he is unable to decide what to do. When he reads the red note-book written by his cousin's wife he begins to notice similarities between her behaviour as she herself describes it, and that of his own wife, who moreover is frequently praised by her. For this reason he wonders whether his wife might not also be having a love affair with another man. On the other hand the notebook contains no clear proof of any infidelity on the part of his wife; and it would be ridiculous to break up his family and cause suffering to his children on such slight indications. He tortures himself in this way, until it occurs to him even that perhaps after all his youngest son does not resemble him. Since he can find no solution to the problem, he decides eventually that the only way out is to commit suicide, even though his wife is away in Assiut and he has never once been able to confront her with his doubts. The "sacred tie" of the title is explained by *Rāhib al-Fikr* as he walks behind the colonel's coffin: "It is the tie of the man with his child. The sacredness springs from the blood which must be purely shared between them. When it is tainted, sullied, adulterated, forged, or even shadowed by the ghost of suspicion and distrust, a man is hardly able to bear it . . . . This is what a woman does not understand, because every child that comes out of her womb is her own; she has no need to distinguish its blood from that of another . . She therefore seldom appreciates the sacredness of the "tie"."(1)

It is noticeable that Hakīm has made extensive use of his own experiences in creating the situations and characters in his novels. In *'Audat al-Rūḥ* he draws on the memories of his boyhood when he was staying with his uncles in Cairo, in *Yaumiyāt Nā'ib fī 'l-Aryāf* on his experiences as an attorney, and in *'Usfūr min al-Sharq* on his life in Paris; even *Rāhib al-Fikr* in *al-Ribāṭ al-Muqaddas* reflects the author in his solitude with his books. His greatest fault, clearly exemplified in *'Usfūr min al-Sharq* and in *Ḥimār al-Ḥakīm* is that he tends to include the ideas in which he is interested in a "raw" state which spoils the unity of his

(1) *al-Ribāṭ al-Muqaddas*, p. 297.

work. In addition to this, there are no profoundly studied, complex personalities among his characters. What is more, the classical Arabic of his narratives and descriptions is neither expressive nor eloquent, although the dialogue, as already mentioned, is excellent.

It is perhaps for these reasons that since 1944 when *al-Ribāṭ al-Muqaddas* was published, Ḥakīm has abandoned the novel and turned to the theatre, which not only makes better use of a gift for dialogue, but also is a more suitable medium for the expression of problems and ideas, and does not require such profound characterization as the novel.

ii

Among the already distinguished writers who made their first attempts at writing a novel in the nineteen thirties, after the success of *Zainab* and *'Audat al-Rūh*, was 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād.(1) His first and only novel, *Sāra* (1938), is about a man named Hammām who is having a love affair with a girl, Sāra, and begins to suspect that she is unfaithful to him. He stops seeing her, and watches her movements. In the end his suspicions are confirmed and he is relieved of the agonies of doubt, yet he is left pondering on the question. "Is it not possible that she was faithful during her friendship with you? . . . Is it not possible that she went astray after you left her, when she lost all hope of you?"(2)

The author presents this situation in a style so burdened with logical argument and analysis that the reader often feels that he is reading an article and not a novel. It seems, as 'Alī al-Rā'ī says, "as if love were an anatomical specimen, and that specimen were pinned out flat, and on it were shone spotlights which throw no shadows, so that discoveries and facts are plainly revealed under them." Dr. Rā'ī goes on to point out that this feeling of abstraction is increased by the fact that the interplay between the two main characters takes place in complete isolation from the society in which the action is set.(3) Indeed, more than any novel discussed in this study, *Sāra* lacks "realism of presentation".(4)

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(1) 'Aqqād was born in Aswan in 1889. He completed his primary education there and moved to Cairo when he was fourteen. He worked in the Civil Service for a time and then turned to journalism. Although he received no formal education beyond the primary stage, he read very widely in English and Arabic and became a prolific writer: he produced more than seventy works, most of which are important studies on literary criticism, biography and philosophy. He was famous as a modernist poet and he fiercely attacked the conservative poets, as mentioned above, as well as the ultra-modern school of free poetry. He died in 1964.

(2) *Sāra*, p. 190.

(3) Rā'ī, *Dirāsāt*, p. 58.

(4) See above pp. 32-33.

The dialogue, which is in simple classical Arabic, is used infrequently. What little action there is in the novel is narrated by the author, or, what amounts to nearly the same thing, is seen through the eyes of Hammām, the hero, who obviously reflects the thoughts and feelings of the author and hardly exists as an independent character. Here we find 'Aqqād committing the same mistake as Haikal with Ḥāmid, Māzinī with Ibrāhīm, and Ḥakīm with Muḥsin and *Rāhib al-Fikr* for instance. The principal weakness of these characters lies in the fact that they are not the products of the author's creative imagination and impersonal observation. All contain an autobiographical element; in each case the author idealizes the character, being unable to present him objectively and critically.[1] At the same time, the author appears to be insufficiently aware that his own experiences, thoughts and feelings in their crude form, unadapted to the requirements of a work of art, are not necessarily suitable material for a novel.

Because of this shortcoming and the other faults mentioned above, *Sāra* is not among the better works discussed in this study; nevertheless, it received a great deal of attention from critics, perhaps because of the eminence of its author.

(1) Even so great a novelist as George Eliot is criticized by F.R. Leavis for similar reasons. See his comments on Maggie Tulliver, Romola and Dorothea, *The Great Tradition*, pp. 51-58, 61-62 & 86-93.

iii

The first novel written by Ṭāhā Husain, *Du'ā' al-Karawān*, has already been discussed above. Of his other novels, the most important is the realistic work *Shajarat al-Bu's* (*The Tree of Misery*, 1944), the first Egyptian novel of generations. Here the author, by tracing the history of a family through three generations, reveals the gradual change in social conditions in Egypt at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, and the way these changes affected family life.

The story of the novel may be summarized as follows: in fulfilment of the wishes of the Shaikh of the local dervish order, who was consulted on every important matter, Khālid is married to an extremely ugly woman, who is the daughter of his father's best friend, 'Abd al-Raḥmān. Khālid's mother, shocked by the ugliness of the proposed daughter-in-law, does her best to prevent the marriage, but her husband 'Alī threatens her with divorce if she does not keep silent. She warns her husband that he will regret it one day, and that this marriage will only mean that he has planted "the tree of misery" (*Shajarat al-Bu's*) in the house. Khālid's marriage is a happy one at first; but when his first child is born, he suddenly realizes how ugly his wife is, for his baby daughter is extremely beautiful. His treatment of his wife begins to change, and he is torn between his sense of religious duty and his emotions. His second child is as ugly as his wife, who is gradually driven to madness by his increasing ill-treatment of her. He remarries, again following the Shaikh's advice, and moves to another town where the Shaikh finds him a job. His first wife and her two daughters join him later. Samīḥa, the beautiful daughter, is soon married, while the ugly Gullanār acts as a servant for the family, which is rapidly increasing. Her engagement to her cousin Ṣābir is broken off, and Ṣābir is married to her half-sister Tafīda instead. Khālid's second wife persuades him to find Ṣābir, now her son-in-law, a job in the same business, so that he can live with them and so that she can see her daughter Tafīda every day, without any consideration for Gullanār, who now has to serve also the man who was once her fiancé. All this has of course its effect on Gullanār, who hides her emotions,

having no one to sympathize with her. Finally a widower friend of her father's, of the same age as he is, proposes to her, although nobody knows whether he is moved by compassion for her, or by his loneliness, or by his friendship with her father. We are not told however whether the marriage takes place. The novel ends with a passage which describes Gullanār sitting crying, not alone as she used to, but with her father's wife and her half-sisters who, we are informed, are now all divorced or widows. After one of her step-mother's usual rude remarks, Gullanār rises and shuts herself in her room; she remains there some days, and then dies.(1)

This summary of course outlines only the main theme of the novel which depicts, besides the tragedy of Gullanār, the lives of her relations.

The work throughout has a pleasant religious atmosphere which reflects the simplicity, sometimes the naïvety, of the village community. However, a certain irony in the portrayal of this religious attitude may be noticed here and there. For instance, when Zubaida, the wife of Salīm, Sābir's father, defends women's rights,(2) the author is indirectly refuting, or rather ridiculing, the tradition "Women are imperfect both in intelligence and in religion," for here Zubaida is shown to be more sensible than either her husband or any other male character in the novel. Again, when 'Alī, Khālid's father, finds that his business is doing badly, as it cannot compete with the European-run firms which have begun to play an increasingly important part in Egyptian trade, he prays frequently that the crisis may pass, "but it was as if Heavens' doors had been closed before him, or as if God had listened to his prayers but answered them in a way better than that he had asked for. 'Alī would ask for money to pay some of his debts, and buy food, clothes and shoes for his sons, daughters and wives, whereas God would listen to and accept his prayers, and keep for him, in return for them, palaces in Paradise. . . " (3)

The social customs and way of life, and the gradual changes which

(1) *Shajarat al-Bu's*, p. 187.

(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 96-103.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 105.

occur during the period covered by the novel, are vividly presented. The strong family ties loosen little by little with the increasing complexity of life. Khālid, when his father's trade becomes unprofitable, is forced to work and live in another city; and his visits to the family become "a rarity for which one's desire is sometimes great, and which one cannot hope to achieve."(1) As a civil servant, he becomes acquainted with high-ranking officials, and aspires to educate his sons so that they can lead a similar life, while his cousin Salīm tenaciously holds the conventional view that "schools were not founded for the sons of the peasants and the middle classes, but for the sons of the upper classes, both Turks and rich Egyptians."(2) He therefore sends one of his sons to learn tailoring, and the other to learn shoemaking. Again Khālid adopts the use of a table and cutlery for meals, while Salīm makes fun of him and continues to sit on the floor and use his fingers in the customary way. Obviously these two characters typify the different attitudes adopted by the Egyptians at that time. Another sign of these social changes is that the educated sons of the younger generation can oppose their fathers firmly, while the fathers themselves were but "shadows", even "imperfect shadows", of their fathers. The authority of religion, which was dominant before, is weakened, and Salīm, who has also become a civil servant, accepts bribes and considers them legitimate so long as he needs them to live.

The content of the novel, as can be seen, is considerably more realistic than that of Ṭāhā Ḥusain's *Du'ā' al-Karawān*, especially in the latter novel's second half. Nevertheless, it also suffers from lack of "realism of presentation"; the author often seems to play no more important a part than that of a story teller — he merely relates the events which occur without going deeply into the characters' motives or the details of their actions. We are told for instance of the fact of Khālid's marriage to his ugly wife, but his feelings about her and her ugliness are not analysed. Likewise we do not know why Khālid neglects Gullanār and allows her to be so badly treated, although he loves her and is shown to be a pious, sensible, good-natured man. Thus, although the characters are on the whole realistic and life-like in so far as their

(1) *Shajarat al-Bu's*, p. 146.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 168.

personalities are revealed by their actions, one knows little of their inner lives.(1)

As already mentioned above, *Shajarat al-Bu's* was the first Egyptian "novel of generations". In writing this type of novel Ṭāhā Ḥusain was followed by Sahhār in *Fī Qāfilat al-Zamān* and *al-Shāri' al-Jadīd*, and also by Mahfūẓ in his *Trilogy*, all of which will be discussed below.

(1) *Shajarat al-Bu's*, pp. 111-2.

iv

Mahmūd Taimūr, whose *Nidā' al-Majhūl* has been discussed above, wrote two other novels in the period covered by this study. *Kilyūbātrā fi Khān al-Khalili* (*Cleopatra in Khān al-Khalili*, 1946) is a humorous novel ridiculing international peace conferences where means of achieving peace are discussed while the cold war continues. *Salwā fi Mahabb al-Riḥ* (*Salwā Blown by the Winds*, 1944), a more realistic type of novel, will be dealt with here.

At the opening of the work, Salwā, the narrator, is ten years old. As her parents were divorced, her father dying while she was still too young to remember, she lives in Alexandria with her grandfather and his two servants, Umm Yūnus and al-Hājj Hanafī She makes friends with Sanīya, Zuhairī Pasha's daughter, and it is while visiting Sanīya that she meets Hamdī, a friend of Sanīya's fiancé Sharīf, whom she later marries, at the same time Zuhairī Pasha himself becomes attracted to her. After her grandfather's death, her mother, whom she has not seen for many years, turns up, and Salwā moves to her mother's house in Cairo, accompanied by the servant Umm Yūnus In time she realizes that her mother is carrying on illicit love affairs with several men in order to earn a living. Zuhairī Pasha meanwhile is being extravagantly generous to them because of his desire to win Salwā, encouraged by her mother, Salwā becomes his mistress, as he refuses to marry her with the excuse that he is too old Umm Yūnus continually reproaches Salwā for the kind of life she is living, and tries to persuade her to marry Hamdī, although he is from a poor family. When Umm Yūnus dies, Salwā is deeply depressed and suddenly decides to follow her advice and marry Hamdī In a short time however she wearies of him because of his poor health and poverty, and she resumes her former relationship with the Pasha, who is well able to provide her with the luxuries she desires Hamdī becomes ill with consumption as a result of overwork trying to provide better conditions for his wife, and is transferred to the sanatorium at Helwan. Salwā moves to live with the Pasha, and although she visits Hamdī at first, she soon neglects him. When the Pasha dies, she returns to

her mother's house, but Sanīya, who has arrived with her husband Sharīf from Switzerland after hearing of her father's death, asks Salwā to stay with her. Sharīf is attracted to Salwā and she becomes his mistress. After her mother's death she goes to live in a flat rented for her by Sharīf where they meet. Sanīya however finds out about her husband's infidelity and ceases giving him money His salary alone is not sufficient for both Salwā's extravagant living and his gambling losses, and eventually he commits suicide, leaving Salwā pregnant. She goes for help to Ḥamdī, only to find that he died some time earlier. Then she goes to one of the Pasha's old servants, Dādā Shīrīn, who has always been kind to her, and who advises her to learn how to sew so that she can work as a dressmaker. It happens that both Sanīya and Salwā have their babies in the same hospital at the same time, Salwā's child has to be sacrificed to save her life, and because Sanīya is too weak to feed her baby, Dādā Shīrīn finds an opportunity to reconcile the two old friends and arranges for Salwā to live with Sanīya as the baby's wet nurse

Salwā, the narrator, is the principal character of the novel, the course of action centres on the story of her life, and even events and characters which have no direct connection with her are naturally seen through her eyes. The other characters are not very profound, and are revealed to the reader only by Salwā's comments on them, ~~by the~~ dialogue and by the part they play in the action.

Taimūr succeeds however in portraying Salwā's life in a natural and convincing way. Salwā is seen at the beginning of the novel as a happy and innocent child living with her grandfather. As an adolescent, she comes under the bad influence of her mother, having a weak personality, she is unable to resist the pressure put upon her by both her mother and the Pasha, and thus agrees to become his mistress. A realistic touch is the way in which Salwā does not always tell the exact truth in relating to other characters what has happened to her; when the Pasha attempts to assault her in the garden at his house, she is scared and runs away, although she tells her mother that she resisted him [1] Similarly she tells her friend Sanīya that Ḥamdī kissed her

(1) *Salwā fī Mahabb al-Rīh*, pp 182-4, 193.

when she went to visit him, although this is a lie.[1] Then at the end of the work, coming under the good influence of Dādā Shīrīn, she is persuaded to repent of her former immoral life and to earn an honest living.

The novel is perhaps to be taken as an illustration of Taimūr's belief that there is a seed of goodness embedded in every creature,[2] and it shows that in a suitable environment this seed will sprout and flourish. Thus we find that Salwā, when living in a favourable environment, i.e. with her grandfather, or, at the end of the work, with Dāhā Shīrīn, is a respectable, honest person. It is only when exposed to an unsuitable environment – the bad influence of her mother, who is a prostitute – that she loses all her principles and lives a life of immorality. Perhaps Taimūr's optimistic view of human nature accounts for the fact that the reader is not made to feel any animosity against any of the characters, even the Pasha who is mainly responsible for Salwā's downfall. This may also be the reason behind the improbable end of the novel, where it seems as if the author wanted to reward Salwā for trying to atone for her former depraved life by earning a difficult but honest living as a dressmaker. He therefore rescues her, as it were, from this hard life, and contrives for her to return to live with her friend Saniya as a wet nurse, so that she will not be deprived of the comforts to which she is accustomed.[3]

This attitude distinguishes Taimūr from Ḥakīm, who aims at criticizing certain aspects of Egyptian society, and from Najīb Mahfūz with his socialist views. Indeed, the novels which Taimūr wrote before the revolution of 1952 are not concerned with the particular problems of Egyptian society; in *Salwā* for instance the characters seem to move in a secluded world of their own – there is no reference to political events and no criticism of society.

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(1) *Salwā fī Mahabb al-Rīh*, pp. 119-127, 131-2

(2) Taimūr, *Dirāsāt fī 'l-Qiṣṣa wa 'l-Masrah*, p. 11.

(3) This is the type of ending which Taimūr himself condemns in other novelists. In his *al-Adab al-Hādif* (*Didactic Literature*), p 173, Taimur enumerates the flaws of contemporary Arabic fiction, among which is "the fondness for stirring and decisive endings which uphold right and goodness, and make virtue and high ideals triumph."

In this the novels differ from Taimūr's earlier short stories, which are characterized by the detailed description of the life of the Egyptian lower classes and by attention to "local colour", as mentioned above. Having studied Western literature and international literary theories, Taimūr says that he came to believe that "local colour is not everything. It is only part of the matter. Great literature is but to turn oneself towards the human soul, and so I turned in this direction."[1]

Since the revolution, however, and perhaps more particularly under the influence of such eminent socialist critics as Maḥmūd al-'Ālim and 'Abd al-'Aẓīm Anīs,[2] Taimūr has begun to devote more space in his novels to political events and social criticism.

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(1) See the introduction to *Fir'aun al-Saghīr wa Qiṣaṣ Ukhrā* (*Little Pharaoh and Other Stories*), a collection of short stories first published by Taimūr in 1939, p. 23.

(2) These two writers were very influential in the field of literary criticism in the mid-fifties, and spread the idea that true literature should serve society. See their book, *Fī 'l-Thaqāfa al-Miṣrīya* (*On Egyptian Culture*).

V

The works of three younger novelists, ʻĀdil Kāmil, ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Sahhār and Najīb Maḥfūẓ, remain to be discussed in this section on the realistic trend. The first two novelists will be dealt with briefly in order to end this study with a more detailed examination of the realistic works of Najīb Mahfūẓ , who is undoubtedly the greatest Arab novelist of the present time.

The novel *Mallim Al-Akbar* (*Mallim Senior*) by ʻĀdil Kāmil was published in 1944 The author had submitted the work to the Academy of the Arabic Language (*al-Majma' al-Lughawi*) for the prize for the best novel of 1944, but the Academy had refused to award the prize on the grounds that none of the works submitted that year reached the required standard. Kāmil therefore wrote a long introduction to this novel, in which he attempted to prove that those who had failed to award the prize to him were ignorant of the true function of literature and the criteria of literary criticism. Kāmil expressed his views on "literary style", "art and ethics", and "Arabic literature", of which he did not have a high opinion, and shows himself to be a cultured man who, besides being well read in classical Arabic literature, has a good knowledge of English literature and literary criticism.

It is possible that it was the appearance of this realistic novel *Mallim al-Akbar* before Maḥfūẓ had published any realistic work, which led some critics to consider that Maḥfūẓ was ʻĀdil Kāmil's disciple and that he was encouraged by Kāmil to turn from history to realism.(1)

It would probably be more correct to say that Kāmil and Maḥfūz were two friends living under the same literary, cultural and social conditions, and it is therefore not surprising that discussions should have taken place between them occasionally, and that they should finally have acted alike in preferring to write on some subjects rather than others. Kāmil himself informs us in the introduction mentioned above that Maḥfūẓ had submitted for the same prize (that of the

(1) This theory is held in some university circles in Egypt

Academy of the Arabic Language) a realistic novel *al-Sarāb* (*The Mirage*, published later in 1948), but that the committee had rejected it "because it describes ordinary everyday life".(1)

Whatever the case may be, 'Ādil Kāmil may be considered the realistic writer who is closest to Maḥfūẓ. The main characteristic of his novel *Mallīm al-Akbar* is its attempt to portray the social injustice to which the poor classes in Egypt were exposed, and the way in which they reacted against this injustice. This is roughly the aim which lies behind most of Maḥfūẓ's works. The difference between the two authors is one of presentation. Whereas Maḥfūẓ uses his artistic talent to expose this injustice objectively and unobtrusively and never ignores the other requirements of the literary art, Kāmil openly pours out his message with great enthusiasm.

Mallīm al-Akbar is about a boy, Mallīm, whose father is sent to prison because he has been selling hashish on a small scale. As the boy is determined to find an honest job, he works as a carpenter's apprentice. One day he goes to mend a window in the house of Khūrshīd Pasha, whose family is presented as a typical example of the corruption and decay of the aristocracy. 'Umar, the Pasha's eldest son, who spends extravagantly on his pleasures, takes the opportunity of stealing five hundred pounds kept in the room where the boy is working, and Mallīm is charged with the theft. Although Khālid, 'Umar's younger brother, who has socialist views in spite of his background, testifies on Mallīm's behalf, Mallīm is sent to prison. When he is released, he works as a caretaker for Naṣīf, who is the head of what seems to be a communist cell. Khālid also joins this cell and is arrested after making a speech and distributing leaflets in a café. His father however arranges his release on condition that he gives up his socialist activities. The novel ends when the cell is broken up as a result of a combined effort between Khūrshīd Pasha, who represents feudalism and capitalism, and the state police. As for Mallīm, he marries a foreign girl who was living in the house in which he was a caretaker and also attended the meetings of the cell. He becomes rich by working in one of the English camps during the Second World War, yet he remains true to his high principles.

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(1) The introduction to *Mallīm al-Akbar*, p. 7, footnote 1.

From this summary the reader can see that the purpose of the novel is to criticize social and political conditions, and from the author's sympathy for socialist ideas, it is clear that he suggests socialism as an answer to the country's problems. The writer's left-wing attitude can be seen in the way he depicts his characters. Mallīm, who comes from a poor family, has noble qualities and high standards, and leads a successful life despite the many difficulties he has to face. He retains all his good qualities even after he has become very rich, although the environment in which he was brought up would not lead one to expect this. If a child like Mallīm, who has no mother and whose father is sent to prison for dealing in narcotics, had been left to a writer like Maḥfūz, his life would probably have been completely different. Similarly, one would expect Khālid to behave differently: he comes from an aristocratic family and is educated in England, where he devours works on history, sociology and economics, and associates with students among whom materialist philosophies are widespread. In spite of the advantages of his upbringing and education however, he is immature and weak, the exact opposite of Mallīm. When he appears in court on behalf of Mallīm for instance, his testimony is confused and the prosecuting counsel makes him look ignorant and ridiculous. On another occasion, after quarrelling with his father about Mallīm, he leaves home, but not fancying the idea of supporting himself by getting a job, he goes off and lives for several weeks with some Bedouin in the desert. The weakness of his personality is also shown in the way he gives up his socialist activities in obedience to his father.

Despite this difference in methods of presentation and in characterization, 'Ādil Kāmil is the writer who most resembles Najīb Maḥfūẓ, not only because both were influenced principally by English culture and literature, but also, as mentioned above, because both have the common purpose of exposing the social injustice from which the poorer classes in Egypt suffer. In this they differ from other writers of realistic works such as Taimūr, Ṭāhā Ḥusain, and 'Aqqād.

It may well have been the obviously socialist views of the author which led the Academy to reject *Mallīm al-Akbar.* In any case the Academy's rejection of the novel is to be regretted, for it seems to have

been one of the factors which discouraged 'Ādil Kāmil from writing any more novels, although to judge by the quality of his two works *Malik min Shu'ā'* and *Mallim al-Akbar*, he would have had a great career as a novelist.

vi

Although 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Sahḥār,[1] as a novelist, does not come up to the standard of Najīb Maḥfūẓ, or even of 'Ādil Kāmil, he performed an important service for the Egyptian novel in general by the foundation of a publishing house in 1943, when means of publication were limited. This publishing house printed the works of such writers as Maḥfūz, who had earlier found it impossible to publish his novels *al-Qāhira al-Jadīda* and *Khān al-Khalīlī*, for instance, although they had already won several prizes.[2]

Like his friends 'Ādil Kāmil and Najīb Maḥfūẓ, Saḥhār began his career as a novelist by writing a historical novel on a Pharaonic subject, *Aḥmus* (*Ahmose*, 1943), and then turned to realism. His two most important novels, *Fī Qāfilat al-Zamān* (*In the Caravan of Time*, 1947), and *al-Shāri' al-Jadīd* (*The New Street*, 1952), will be discussed here.

Fī Qāfilat al-Zamān, Sahḥār's first realistic novel, is perhaps the best of his works. Like Ṭāhā Ḥusain's *Shajarat al-Bu's*, it describes the life of a family through three generations. Its principal weakness is that the reader feels the different parts of the work to be unbalanced, the account of the love affair of Mustafā, a member of the third generation, with a girl called Rashīl (Rachel) takes up so great a part of the novel that one would think it the main theme, were it not that the detailed description of the rest of the family's life makes this impossible. Another fault is that none of the characters are profoundly studied. Nevertheless *Fī Qāfilat al-Zamān* is worth reading for its vivid representation of social customs prevalent in Cairo at the beginning of this century. Here the influence of *Shajarat al-Bu's* can clearly be seen. The social background is presented convincingly and naturally, and the political events which are mentioned are always relevant to the action.

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(1) 'Abd al-Hamīd Jūda al-Sahhār was born in Cairo in 1913, and graduated from the Faculty of Commerce in 1937. He has held various governmental posts and is now Director of the Organization for the Support of the Cinema He has written many works, including novels, biographies and children's books.

(2) See an interview with Najīb Mahfūẓ by Aḥmad Ḥamrūsh entitled *Unādī bi 'l-Ṣūfiya al-Ishtirākīya*, *al-Jumhūrīya*, January 2nd, 1960, p. 14.

al-Shāri' al-Jadid, also a "novel of generations", is a less successful work. The novel traces the life of a family through three generations, and, like Maḥfūẓ's *Bidāya wa Nihāya* (*Beginning and End*, 1949), has as its main theme the struggle of a mother to bring up and educate her children in the face of unfavourable social conditions. In *Bidāya wa Nihāya* the mother fails: one of her sons is forced to abandon his university education in order to support the family, another son is living off a woman's immoral earnings, her daughter is driven to commit suicide after the discovery of her immoral living, and the remaining son is found, at the end of the work, also contemplating suicide because of the disgrace. In *al-Shāri' al-Jadid*, on the other hand, thanks to the mother's incredible efforts, the eldest son gets a job on a relative's estate, another son becomes an officer in the air force, and the remaining four sons all graduate from university and find respectable jobs.

While Maḥfūz in his work spotlights only four or five characters and describes realistically the social conditions in which they live, Saḥḥār introduces an army of characters — a father, a mother, two sons, one single and the other married with six children (it is these six children who owe their education to their mother's patient efforts), five married daughters, with their husbands and a good number of children, and of course their other relatives, friends and acquaintances. The result is that while the reader retains in his mind a clear picture of Maḥfūẓ's characters, he can hardly recall any of the characters in Sahḥār's novel, except perhaps a vague picture of the patient mother Ṣafiya, and her helpless husband 'Alī, who puts the whole burden of responsibility on her shoulders.

Sahhār's method of dealing with this type of novel can also be contrasted with that of Ṭāhā Ḥusain in *Shajarat al-Bu's*. The latter author knows how to control the scope of his novel, even though he manages to do this in rather a clumsy fashion, stating, for instance, that a certain character has married and has led a life which he need not recount here. Thus he is able to deal with his characters and situations according to their importance, some in detail, some superficially, while others are entirely neglected. The result is that the reader has before him a clear and coherent work, while Saḥḥār's *al-Shāri' al-Jadid* seems to be a mere accumulation of events and vague characters.

vii

With Najīb Maḥfūẓ's realistic works, the Egyptian, or rather the Arab, novel entered a new era. In these works we find few of the faults which mar so many of the novels discussed above: there is no straying from the main theme, no far-fetched coincidences, no direct didacticism and no improbability in the plots or the characterization. The situations and the characters are completely true to life, and show the author's gift for careful observation, and detailed, objective description of human types and their behaviour. At the same time Mahfūẓ's excellent command of the Arabic language enables him to express the entire range of human emotion clearly and eloquently. Whereas many earlier novels such as *Zainab, Ibrāhīm al-Kātib, 'Uṣfūr min al-Sharq* and *Sāra* had suffered because the principal character was too obviously a reflection of the author. Najīb Maḥfūz had been a prolific writer for almost twenty years before it was possible to identify him with one of his characters, Kamāl 'Abd al-Jawād in the *Trilogy* (1956-7). Indeed one admires in Mahfūẓ's works the immense variety of characters whose innermost thoughts and emotions are convincingly described. The reader shares the feelings, for example, of a woman when driven to commit suicide because she has disgraced her family, of an ordinary girl when deciding to become a prostitute, of a religious man whose doubts gradually lead him towards agnosticism, of a procurer while he practices his trade, of a pious mystic whose faith no catastrophe can affect; of a husband when he has to leave his home for two hours every week so that a lover may visit his wife. Maḥfūẓ's works are undoubtedly the first to provide the Arab reader with an opportunity of entering so many private worlds different from his own limited one. For all these reasons, Arab critics are one in admiring and appreciating Najīb Maḥfūẓ's works.

Speaking about his literary life,' Maḥfūẓ mentions that he had intended to write "the complete history of Ancient Egypt in the novel form, in the same way as Scott had done with the history of his country." Maḥfūẓ says that he had prepared his subjects for forty novels, of which he wrote only three, *'Abath al-Aqdār* (1939), *Rādūbis* (1943),

and *Kifāḥ Ṭiba* (1944), and he continues, "Suddenly the desire to write historical romances died within me, and I found myself turning to realism in *al-Qāhira al-Jadīda* (*New Cairo*) without any preliminaries. I remained absorbed in this until I finished the *Trilogy* in April 1952. I had still seven subjects for novels of the same critical realistic trend, when the (1952) revolution occurred, and the motive for writing the seven subjects vanished . . . For when the old society went, every desire within me to criticise it went too. I thought my literary career had come to an end. I had nothing to say or write. I was sincere in announcing this. It was not a matter of propaganda as some thought. I went on like this from 1952 to 1957, and did not write a single word, and I felt no desire to write. I considered the matter completely finished, until I found myself writing *Aulād Ḥāratinā* (*The Children of Our Quarter*) which I published in 1959."(1)

It can be said then that Maḥfūz has passed through three stages in his development as a writer, the first being a historical phase, when he wrote the three historical novels which have been discussed above, and the second a realistic, or naturalistic phase, which began with *al-Qāhira al-Jadīda*, published in 1945, and ended with *The Trilogy*, which according to Maḥfūz was finished in 1952, although it was published only in 1956-7. The third phase of Maḥfūẓ's work, beginning with *Aulād Ḥāratinā* in 1959, consists also of realistic novels, but they differ from those of the second phase in that they deal with ideas rather than with social problems. As these novels were written after the period covered by this study, they will not be examined in detail here, however a few general characteristics of this phase will be mentioned below, after a discussion of some of the novels of the second phase.

The second phase comprises nine novels, which are *al-Qāhira al-al-Jadīda* (*New Cairo*, 1945), *Khān al-Khalīlī* (1946), *Zuqāq al-Midaqq* (*Midaqq Alley*, 1947), *al-Sarāb* (*The Mirage*, 1948), *Bidāya wa Nihāya* (*Beginning and End*, 1949), and the *Trilogy*, which consists of *Bain al-Qaṣrain* (1956), *Qaṣr al-Shauq* (1957) and *al-Sukkariya* (1957). Each of these last three works, and *Khān al-Khalīlī*, are named after streets in the Azhar district of Cairo.

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(1) Dawwāra, *Riḥlat al-Khamsīn*, *al-Kātib*, January 1963, p. 17.

In these novels, Maḥfūẓ describes with courageous outspokenness the problems of the poorer classes in Egypt, and in this respect he is doing what Balzac did for France and Dickens did for England in the last century.(1) The poorer classes in Egypt constitute the vast majority of the population, and so in devoting these novels to them, Maḥfūẓ is really dealing with the characteristics, the ideals, and the problems of the Egyptian community as a whole.

All the works of this phase demonstrate the social injustice from which these classes suffer; this is clear even in Maḥfūẓ's first realistic novel, *al-Qāhira al-Jadīda.* The hero, Maḥjūb, is an undergraduate who has so far managed to live on three pounds a month, which is all his father can afford from his salary of eight pounds a month, after twenty five years' service in the Greek Dairy of al-Qanāṭir. His father is stricken with paralysis, and therefore unable to work, only four months before his final examination at the Faculty of Law, and he then has to be content with only one pound a month, as his father can spare no more from the tiny amount the company pays him. Maḥjūb manages to get his degree, but is then unable to find a job since he has no money for bribes and no friends or relatives to find him a position. He is left unemployed while all his rich friends are established in different careers. In his despair, poverty and bewilderment, he falls an easy victim to Ikhshīdī, who comes from his own village, and works as secretary to Qāsim Bey Fahmī, an important official. He consults Ikhshīdī, who says: ' "I hope that you are practical, understand the world well, and know that every favour has its price. I don't ask you anything for myself. I am only a guide."

' " — No, really . . "

'Ikhshīdī then smiled and said, "If you take my word, there are powerful men who can help people like you . . . There is, for example 'Abd al-'Azīz Bey Rāḍī. Haven't you heard of him?"

' "Yes, I think he is the well-known business man."

' "That's the one. His word is respected in the present regime. His special province is the Ministry of the Interior."

(1) Trevor Le Gassick, *Najib Mahfouz's Trilogy, Middle East Forum,* February 1963, p. 34.

'"How can I get his help?"

'"It is easy, but you should know that he takes half the salary of the people he appoints for two years."

'The price appalled the impoverished young man who looked at his companion with alarm, and asked him after hesitation, "Isn't there anyone whose conditions are easier?"

'Ikhshīdī said immediately, as if he were a waiter reading the menu, "The famous singer, Miss Daulat."

'Surprise showed on the young man's pale face, but the other took no notice of him and went on. "Her provinces of influence are the railways and the Ministry of War, and some big country estates . . . The prices are as follows. jobs of the 8th grade cost thirty pounds, of of the 7th grade forty pounds, and of the 6th grade one hundred pounds to be paid at once." '[1]

Eventually Ikhshīdī is able to offer him a job as Qāsim Bey's secretary on condition that he marries Qāsim Bey's mistress and permits him to continue to visit her. He is compelled by his circumstances to accept this proposition. As a result of his wife's relationship with Qāsim Bey, Maḥjūb is quickly promoted until he reaches a position higher than that of Ikhshīdī himself. In his jealousy, Ikhshīdī arranges for Qāsim Bey's wife to call at Mahjūb's house when her husband is with his mistress. The scandal becomes public; Qāsim Bey, now a minister, has to resign, and Mahjūb is transferred to Aswan.

The reader's attention is drawn to the injustice from which Mahjūb and very many like him suffer, yet there is no actual preaching or idealization of the character; indeed Mahjūb is depicted as a most disagreeable young man, selfish and unprincipled. One of the characteristics which distinguishes Maḥfūẓ from other Egyptian novelists is that he is always objective in portraying his characters. There is no doubt that he sympathizes with people like Maḥjūb, and that for this reason he chooses such people as the main characters in his novels; however not only does he describe objectively the poverty and miserable conditions in which they live, but he also exposes their defects in the same

(1) *Al-Qāhira al-Jadīda*, pp. 84-5.

detached manner. This is perhaps done in order to make the description of social injustice life-like: the reader at no time feels that he is presented with an idealized, innocent poor who are oppressed by a cruel state.

Besides depicting the social conditions in Cairo in the late nineteen thirties, *al-Qāhira al-Jadīda* also presents the main intellectual trends of the period. Maḥfūẓ chooses three undergraduates to represent different attitudes: 'Ali Ṭāhā represents the communist point of view; he believes in "the materialistic explanation of life", and that "goodness is more deeply rooted in human nature than religion is, therefore it is goodness which created religion and not vice versa, as he had formerly imagined." He would say, "I used to be virtuous when I had a religion and did not exercise my reason; now I am still virtuous while I exercise my reason and have no superstition." He also likes to call himself a "socialist", and his spiritual journey, which had begun in Mecca, ended in Moscow.(1)

Ma'mūn, whose father was a teacher at a religious school, is a Muslim Brother who has "a great faith in three things which he never abandoned throughout his life God, virtue and the cause of Islam."(2) He believes that "Islam has its own moderate socialism. It has *al-Zakāh* (the poor rate), which, if it were applied precisely, would guarantee social equality without outraging the instincts upon which man calls for help in his struggle." Islam is also the system which offers the world "true brotherhood, happiness and justice".(3)

Another trend is represented by Maḥjūb, who believes in nothing and ridicules every value. Mahfūẓ himself remarks, in an interview published by the magazine *Ḥiwār*, that Maḥjūb, Yāsīn and Kamāl (the last two are characters in the *Trilogy*) represent the "uncommitted attitude".(4)

This attitude, which was widespread at that time, was perhaps caused by the failure of the 1919 revolt to achieve swift inde-

(1) *Al-Qāhira al-Jadīda*, pp. 22-3.
(2) *Ibid.*, p. 14.
(3) *Ibid.*, p. 24.
(4) Shukrī, *Najīb Maḥfūẓ*, *Ḥiwār*, no 3, 1963, p. 67.

pendence as people had hoped, because of the disunity of the political leaders and the subsequent disintegration of the *Wafd* into many conflicting parties, and also by the oppressive government of Ṣidqī Pasha, the political corruption which had increased from the twenties onwards, and by the appalling sense of social injustice which was experienced by people like Maḥjūb who, though educated, came from lower class families. Another factor may have been the translation of works of writers such as Darwin, which were helping to weaken traditional religious beliefs. All this contributed to the creation of a large group of people who, disillusioned and unsettled, had lost what beliefs or values they may have had, and found nothing to replace them.

Zuqāq al-Midaqq, the third novel of the second phase of Maḥfūẓ's work, was received with great enthusiasm and praise by the critics. It is not the story of one person, or even a few people, but a picture of life which shows how the poorer classes in Egypt fared during the Second World War, and how they were affected by it.

The novel depicts the lives of the inhabitants of the alley known as *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*. It begins with a brief description of the *Zuqāq* and an animated picture of nightfall there with all its bustling activity: "A whispering here, a muttering there. Oh God, my Help, O Provider, O Generous one. A quiet death, O God. All is in His hand. Good evening all. Come on, it is time for entertainment. Get up, Uncle Kāmil, and close the shop Change the water of the hookah, Sunqur! Put the oven out, Ja'da!"(1)

The author proceeds from this to describe the various characters and their lives in about two hundred pages, after which the novel gradually centres on the story of Ḥamīda, a foundling who is brought up by the matchmaker Umm Ḥamīda. Ḥamīda's one ambition is to leave the *Zuqāq*, the inhabitants of which she regards as insignificant and dull. She is persuaded in spite of herself to become engaged to Abbās al-Ḥilw, the young owner of a barber's shop in the *Zuqāq*, who is deeply in love with her. While he is away working in an English army camp at al-Tall al-Kabīr in order to be able to afford a better life for them both, Ḥamīda's hand is sought by Salīm 'Ulwān, a suc-

(1) *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*, p. 6.

cessful merchant who has already a wife and grown-up sons. The proposal is eagerly accepted by Ḥamīda and her foster-mother who, forgetting 'Abbās, think only of the merchant's money and position. The merchant has a heart attack however, and the marriage is broken off. It is at this point that Hamīda attracts the attention of Faraj Ibrāhīm, a professional pimp who takes advantage of war-time conditions and the presence of many allied troops in Cairo to run a school for prostitutes. His plan is to deceive beautiful poor girls by pretending that he is passionately in love with them until they in turn fall in love with him, as they invariably do because of his good looks, his display of wealth, and his luxurious house. When it is too late for them to escape, he discloses himself as a pimp. It is on the occasion of an election party in the *Zuqāq* that he sees the beautiful Ḥamīda for the first time, and from that moment puts his plan into action until she is finally persuaded to move to his flat, and finishes the courses at his school, which provides classes for teaching Arab and Western dancing, as well as the words of love in English. When 'Abbās arrives from al-Tall al-Kabīr and finds that Ḥamīda has disappeared from the *Zuqāq*, he is distraught and sets out to look for her. He finally meets her, and she convinces him that he should take revenge on the pimp, whose love she has despaired of winning. But 'Abbās happens to see her one day in a bar sitting among the soldiers in a shameless way; he loses control of himself, throws an empty bottle at her, and injures her face badly The angry and drunken soldiers throw bottles at him and beat him to death.

Although the story of Ḥamīda forms the principal action of the novel, there are several sub-plots which serve to describe the lives of the other inhabitants of the *Zuqāq*. There are, for instance, Zīṭa and Dr. Būshī, who together steal the gold teeth of those who have recently died, so that Dr. Būshī can supply them at a cheap price to the rich inhabitants of the *Zuqāq*. Eventually they are caught in a tomb and sent to prison. Both of these characters are interesting personalities: Dr. Būshī "wears a *jilbāb* (long gown), a skull cap, and wooden clogs (*qubqāb*). He is a dentist, but he took his craft from life, without having any need for the school of medicine, or any other school. In his early life he worked as a dentist's assistant in al-Jammalīya (the district of Cairo where Maḥfūẓ was born). He learned his craft by his

intelligence, and excelled in it. He was famous for his beneficial prescriptions, though he often preferred extraction as the best treatment. The extraction of a molar in his "mobile clinic" would be painful and agonizing, but it was cheap. One piastre for the poor, and two for the rich — the rich of the *Zuqāq* of course. When there was bleeding — which was not at all rare — it was usually considered an act of God and its healing would be left to God too ... He was called in the *Zuqāq* and the neighbouring quarters "Doctor". Perhaps he was the first dentist to gain his title from his patients."(1)

Būshī, however, is not as respectable as he appears outwardly. He is beaten up once in an air-raid shelter when he attempts to assault a young girl. He works with Zīta, not only stealing gold teeth, but also helping him in his business of faking disablements for beggars. He is the most delighted and satisfied among those present when Mrs. Kirsha bursts into her husband's café and attacks the boy whom her husband, a homosexual, has brought there, although of course it is a scandal which Būshī pretends to regret. With this hypocrisy Būshī manages to deceive everybody, so much so that when ʿAbbās hears of his imprisonment for the theft of gold teeth from the dead, he is dumbfounded and wonders how Dr Būshī could have committed such a crime, although he is not at all surprised to find Zīta involved.

Zīta is a more sophisticated character. The author introduces him to the reader as "a heap of something which would be indistinguishable from the ground in dirt, colour and smell, were it not for some limbs, flesh and blood which give him the right — despite everything — to be called a human being. That is Zīṭa, who rented this piece of wasteland from Ḥusnīya, the baker's wife. It was enough to see him once. You would never forget him afterwards .. He was a thin black body in a black garment, blackness upon blackness; yet Zīṭa was not a negro ... Dirt, encrusted with a lifetime's sweat, formed a black layer on his body. His garment was not black at first either; but blackness was the fate of everything in this wasteland."(2)

The author describes how Zīṭa's beggar parents were pleased at

(1) *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*, pp. 8-9

(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

his birth, for this saved them the bother of hiring a child to attract the sympathy of passers-by. Zīṭa remembers with longing his "happy childhood" and says, "I still remember my resting place on the pavement ... a hollow in the ground in which the water stagnates, water from the rain, from a water-cart, or from an animal. The mud forms into lumps at the bottom, on the surface flies sing; and on the edges collects the dirt of the road ... Its water was muddy, its bank was refuse of different colours: tomato skins, scraps of parsley, dust and mud. Flies would hover over it and alight on it. I would lift my eyelids heavy with flies, and feast my eyes on that delightful summer resort and the world could not contain my happiness."(1)

Zīta's work, apart from the stealing of golden teeth from the dead with Dr. Būshī, is the faking of infirmites for those who wanted to take up begging as a profession, who "come to him in good health and leave him blind, crippled, hunch-backed, pigeon-chested, with amputated hands and legs."(2) This character has received tremendous attention from the critics; and is also well-known among the reading public. It is possible that Maḥfūz took the idea of Zīṭa from Brecht's character Jonathan Beachum, "the beggar's friend" in the *Threepenny Novel*, first published in English in 1937 under the title *A Penny for the Poor*, but although there are a few similarities between the two characters,(3) Maḥfūẓ has completely Egyptianized both the situation and the character.

Zīṭa's filth and evil smell make the inhabitants of the *Zuqāq* avoid him; he in his turn despises and hates them all, especially Ja'da, the owner of the only bakery in the *Zuqāq*. Zīṭa spies on Ja'da and his wife through a hole in their wall, and, besides satisfying his animal desires, sees the wife beating her husband for trivial misdeeds. Thinking that the woman must be dissatisfied with Ja'da, and regarding himself as a more suitable object of affection, he makes advances to her, but is firmly rejected.

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(1) *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*, p. 164.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 71.

(3) Both fake infirmities for beggars and instruct them, both monopolize special districts for their beggars, beggars give both of them a share of their earnings. See *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*, pp 71, 73-74, 76-78 & 156 ; and Brecht's *Threepenny Novel*, pp. 19-20.

Ziṭa and Būshī, however, do not complete the number of the inhabitants of the *Zuqāq*. There is, for instance, Riḍwān al-Ḥusainī, the dignified and philanthropic mystic (Ṣūfī) who is beloved and respected by all, and whose faith cannot be shaken by any calamity, even the loss of all his many children. Everybody in the *Zuqāq* seeks help from him in times of hardship or trouble, and no one is disappointed. His faith enables him "to tread underfoot the grief of this world, to fly in his heart to Heaven, and to pour out his love to all people."[1] He feels responsible for the people of the *Zuqāq*, and he feels guilty for instance when he hears that Zīta, out of pressure of necessity, has been stealing from tombs: "How forcibly his hunger drew my attention to my firm body and my rosy face," he says, "until shame overwhelmed me and I was overcome by tears."[2] He even refuses to increase the rent of his tenants although a military decree entitles him to do so. Riḍwān is not a realistic character in the sense that one often meets people like him; he is perhaps rather the ideal man which Mahfūz had in mind when, several years after the publication of *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*, he spoke of "socialist mysticism" (*ṣūfiya ishtirākiya*). In an interview in the newspaper *al-Jumhūriya*, Mahfūẓ explains that what he means by this is "striving for God (*at-tatallu' ilā 'llāh*)" which cannot be experienced by the individual unless his life is free from evil acts and sins. But whenever there is an exploiter, he is evil, and the man he exploits is wretched, and the relationship between them is one of rancour and hatred, not of striving for God.[3] Riḍwān is a character who has achieved this ideal standard of behaviour; most of the other inhabitants of the *Zuqāq* on the other hand, whom poverty, ignorance and unemployment have led into crooked or immoral practices, are full of hatred towards each other, being both exploited and exploiters.

Even Salīm 'Ulwān, the only other rich inhabitant of the *Zuqaq*, is devoid of any of Riḍwān's good qualities. Although he has great wealth he gives no help to the poor, to whom indeed he is utterly hostile, and if any misfortune happens to him, he regards it as the result of their evil eye.

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(1) *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*, p 14.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 348.

(3) See Ahmad Hamrūsh, *Unādī bi 'l- Ṣūfiya al-Ishtirākiya*, *al-Jumhūriya*, January 2nd, 1960, p. 9.

Besides the characters who have already been mentioned, there is also Kirsha, the owner of the only café in the *Zuqāq*, who has become used to scandals about his homosexual activities, on which he spends the handsome profit he makes from his trade in hashish. He also supplements his income by providing voters for the candidate who pays him most at the general election. His son Ḥusain, who is dissatisfied with life in the *Zuqāq*, goes to work in an English army camp where he can earn large sums of money He spends all his wages in the belief that the war will last for at least twenty years. When it comes to an end however, he realizes the painful reality and says: "We are wretched; a wretched country, and a wretched people. Isn't it saddening that we can't experience any happiness unless the whole world is in conflict in a bloody war?"(1)

Although Maḥfūẓ manages to sustain the reader's attention throughout the novel, *Zuqāq al-Midaqq* suffers from a certain lack of unity, because the large number of characters are connected, not by a single action, but only by the fact that they are neighbours. *Bidāya wa Nihāya* and the *Trilogy* are more successful in this respect, for although they both contain numerous characters, Mahfūz has linked their lives by making them members of one family.

Mahfūz has not created the many characters of *Zuqāq al-Midaqq* merely for the sake of creating characters. The world of the *Zuqāq* exists as a criticism of the real world — the novel is a cry in the ears of the authorities: this is your society, or by far the greater part of it, which receives nothing from you but neglect and contempt. One admires Maḥfūẓ for having the courage and humanity to describe in such detail a man like Zīta, while most other people either try to pretend that such sordidness and filth do not exist, or else deny that this is a proper subject for a work of art.

Whatever the qualities of *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*, however, it cannot equal the *Trilogy*, the last of Mahfūz's works during this second phase, and undoubtedly the greatest novel in modern Arabic literature. The *Trilogy* manifests in a more mature way the characteristics of the earlier realistic novels, and also heralds the new techniques which

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(1) *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*, p. 313.

Maḥfūẓ was to use in his later novels. In this long work, which demonstrates his capacity for sustained creative effort, Maḥfūẓ gives a detailed and faithful picture of Egyptian life between the First and Second World Wars, and in doing so he touches on the fundamental problems shared by the whole human race.

The novels which make up the *Trilogy* are *Bain al-Qaṣrain* (1956), *Qaṣr al-Shauq* (1957), and *al-Sukkariya* (1957). As mentioned above, although the work was published later, it was completed in 1952 and therefore comes within the period covered by this study. The three novels are set in the Azhar district of Cairo where Maḥfūẓ was born and brought up, and take their titles from the names of streets there.

The first part of the work, *Bain al-Qaṣrain*, portrays the life of a well-to-do merchant, al-Sayyid Aḥmad 'Abd al-Jawād, and his family in the period between 1917 and 1919. 'Abd al-Jawād is forty-five years of age when the novel opens, and his wife Amīna is forty. He has three sons, Yāsīn, whose mother, 'Abd al-Jawād's first wife, was divorced, Fahmī, a student at the High School of Law, Kamāl, a young boy at the primary school, and two daughters, Khadīja, who is twenty, and 'Ā'isha, who is sixteen. The principal events in the novel, for instance the marriages of Yāsīn, Khadīja and 'Ā'isha, all help to demonstrate the severity and extreme strictness of the father, who acts as adictator at home, reserving his good-naturedness and sense of humour for his friends and mistresses. 'Ā'isha, who is beautiful though slim, for slimness was not the fashion at that time, is prevented by her father from marrying a police officer with whom she has fallen in love, although she has only seen him through the half-closed shutters of the window. 'Abd al-Jawād, who of course knows nothing of this, refuses the officer's proposal because 'Ā'isha is the younger sister, who should not marry while her older sister is still a spinster. Later on, however, he accepts a proposal for 'Ā'isha, because it is made by Mrs. Shaukat, an elderly Turkish lady whose family have been close friends of 'Abd al-Jawād's family for generations. Yāsīn's marriage is the next to take place. His father decides that he must marry after catching him attempting to assault the middle-aged servant Umm Ḥanafī. Yāsīn of course has to obey. The bride chosen by 'Abd al-Jawād is Zainab, the daughter of his closest friend Muḥammad 'Iffat. When Yāsīn is

caught with Zainab's servant, she returns to her own family, determined not to go back to her husband, even though they now have a son, Riḍwān. ʿAbd al-Jawād, under pressure from his friend, summons Yāsīn again to tell him that he must divorce his wife, and the divorce has to take place.

Although it has seemed that Khadīja, the older and uglier daughter, will be left a spinster all her life, eventually the widower Ibrāhīm Shaukat, ʿĀ'isha's brother-in-law, asks for her hand. In a passage which shows realistically the mother's love for her daughter and the father's severity, Amīna tells ʿAbd al-Jawād of the proposal made for Khadīja. He becomes enraged when he hears that without his knowledge Ibrāhīm happened to have seen Khadīja when she was visiting her sister. Amīna's heart is in her mouth in case this incident leads ʿAbd al-Jawād in a fit of temper to reject the proposal, and thus ruin their daughter's prospects of a happy future, as she is unlikely to have a second proposal. ʿAbd al-Jawād however, who really cares for his daughter, after making a display of his anger, grumblingly agrees to the marriage.

The revolt of 1919 increasingly occupies the attention of everybody in the family in the second half of the work. Fahmī takes part in the demonstrations, and the novel ends when ʿAbd al-Jawād enters to announce to the family, who have gathered to listen to Kamāl sing, the tragic news of Fahmī's death in one of the demonstrations.

Apart from the vivid presentation of the life of this family, the novel is marked, like the other parts of the *Trilogy*, by two main characteristics: firstly, the delightful sense of humour which is found throughout, especially in the conversations of Yāsīn, Khadīja and the young Kamāl, and also of ʿAbd al-Jawād in his nightly meetings with his friends; and secondly, the accurate account of social life and political events as seen through the eyes of the family.

Another characteristic of the novel, as Maḥmūd Amīn al-ʿĀlim remarks in his article on *Bain al-Qaṣrain*, is that it is dominated by the naturalistic recording of every detail, however minute; the author describes for instance how the little toe of ʿAbd al-Jawād is eaten away by the continual cutting out of an incurable corn with a razor blade,

and how Amīna's mother feels with her feet for her shoes before slipping them on. 'Ālim goes on to point out that the description of external details is paralleled by comprehensive psychological analysis: Maḥfūẓ traces the formation of his characters' feelings, their development, change and transition from one state to another with considerable accuracy and inimitable zeal.(1)

This comment applies not only to the first novel of the *Trilogy*, but also to the novels of the second phase as a whole, where we find that a large part of each work is taken up by the careful recording of descriptive detail, and the analysis of the characters' thoughts and feelings.

The second part of the *Trilogy*, *Qaṣr al-Shauq*, begins five years after Fahmī's death, with which the first part ends. The reader learns in the first few chapters what has happened to the family during this interval: 'Abd al-Jawād, the father, has temporarily given up his mistresses because of Fahmī's death, though he still drinks and continues his nightly meetings with his friends; Kamāl, who was a child of ten at the beginning of *Bain al-Qaṣrain*, has now completed his secondary education. Yāsīn's son Riḍwān is now five years old, the same age as his cousins 'Abd al-Mun'im and Aḥmad, Khadīja's children. Each of these three children represents a main intellectual trend in the last part of the *Trilogy*, *al-Sukkariya*, as will be seen below.

In the course of the novel, Yāsīn marries a girl named Maryam, with whom Fahmī had formerly been in love. The presence of Maryam in the house is painful to Amīna because it reminds her of her dead son, and therefore Yāsīn is obliged to move to a house in Qaṣr al-Shauq which he has inherited from his mother.

'Abd al-Jawād falls a victim to a dancing girl, Zannūba, who forces him to rent her a house-boat on the Nile, and even presumes to demand that either he marry her or else end their relationship. This is a great blow to the pride of a man like 'Abd al-Jawād, who used to be a favourite among women of her kind. Zannūba manages to attract Yāsīn as well, and a dreadful quarrel takes place between him and his wife Maryam when she catches them together. He divorces Maryam, and Zannūba becomes his third wife.

(1) Maḥmūd al-'Ālim, *Bain al-Qaṣrain*, *al-Risāla al-Jadīda*, March 1st, 1957, p. 11.

The greater part of this novel is devoted to Kamāl, who falls in love with a girl from an aristocratic family, whose brother is his best friend. The girl, however, uses him only as a means to attract the attention of a young man of her own class, who becomes her husband in the end.

One of the most admirable chapters in *The Trilogy* is that in which 'Abd al-Jawād summons Kamāl to call him to account for an article which he has written about Darwin's theory of evolution.(1) 'Abd al-Jawād, who can barely read and write, cannot understand how his son believes in a theory which claims that man is the descendant of an animal, when the Koran states quite clearly that the father of the entire human race is Adam. Even the Jews and Christians, he knows, believe in Adam. "All the religions believe in Adam, so what religion does this Darwin belong to? He is a *kāfir* (unbeliever) and what he says is *kufr* (unbelief), and to pass on his words is irresponsible. Tell me: Is he one of your teachers at the school?"

The dialogue continues in this strain, and Kamāl—who is more afraid of his father than of God, since "God may postpone his punishment, while his father's nature is to hasten it"—tries in vain to calm his father.

The novel ends with the death from typhoid of 'Ā'isha's husband and her two sons, which occurs in the same year, 1927, as the death of Sa'd Zaghlūl, whose political opinions and activities are usually presented and defended by Kamāl in his frequent discussions with his friends.

The third part of the *Trilogy*, *al-Sukkariya*, begins about eight years later. The opening pages of the novel introduce the reader, through the family's daily gathering for coffee, to what has happened to the family during the period between the two novels. In the earlier days this gathering used to be attended by Fahmī, Kamāl, Khadīja, 'Ā'isha, their mother, and Umm Ḥanafī, the servant. Now the only people present are these last three and Na'īma, 'Ā'isha's only daughter, who survived the catastrophe which caused the deaths of her father and

(1) *Qaṣr al-Shauq*, pp. 318-325.

two brothers. Amīna, the mother, has become much thinner, and her hair has turned white. "She was always thinking of 'Ā'isha to the extent that she almost forgot the symptoms of blood pressure and its ailments which have begun to afflict her ... She is no longer the Amīna of the past. Sadness and illness have changed her greatly. In the course of time she has lost her wonderful endurance in her work, and her exceptional energy in tidying, cleaning and other housework. The only affairs she would care for are those of the Sayyid (her husband) and Kamal."(1)

'Ā'isha too is no longer "the 'Ā'isha of the past". That 'Ā'isha has gone with her husband Muḥammad, and her sons 'Uthmān and Khalīl. Her mother looks at her "to find a concrete example of the frustrations of hope and to see her miserable face which had lost any sign of life."(2) She has become so nervous that she answers her mother harshly or makes cruel remarks. She not only drinks coffee, a thing she would never have done before her unfortunate marriage, but smokes as well.

'Abd al-Jawād has also become another person. The man who used to come home a few hours before dawn, after enjoying his nightly meeting with his friends and mistresses, now comes home at 9 o'clock in the evening to find "a yoghurt and an orange prepared for his supper. No wine, no relishes, no meat, no eggs", yet "the shine of his wide blue eyes remained a sign that his zest for life did not slacken or weaken." His wife Amīna would help him to take off his clothes, and bring him half a cupful of water in which he puts the drops of medicine. "But his heart had not given up the hope that he might, by God's aid, retrieve his health and enjoy a good and quiet life, since the life of the past had gone for ever."(3)

Kamāl, who is now a school teacher, sadly notices all this. "It is not easy to see his father in his weakness, after his domination and tyranny, or to see his mother's pallor and her fading into old age, or to see 'Ā'isha's disintegration and deterioration", that is, to see "this

(1) *al-Sukkarīya*, p 6.
(2) *Ibid.*, p. 5.
(3) *Ibid.*, p. 8

atmosphere which is charged with bad omens of misery and finality."[1] We are made to feel with him how terrible are the changes time brings, not only to his family, but to every human family: "To accompany a family from its youth until it reaches old age is a saddening thing".[2] Indeed, as Mahfūẓ himself states, time is "the hero of the *Trilogy*."[3] It is responsible for every change both physical, moral, psychological and social

A year after 'Abd al-Jawād's death, 'Abd al-Mun'im Shaukat, one of Khadīja's sons who is now an undergraduate, marries his cousin Na'īma in order to be able to satisfy his sexual impulses in accordance with the Muslim religion. In the course of the novel, Na'īma dies in childbirth, and 'Abd al-Mun'im marries one of his other cousins, Karīma, Yāsīn's daughter, while his brother Ahmad marries a girl who is a communist like himself. The two brothers are under arrest when the novel ends, the former for being a Muslim Brother, and the latter for being a communist.

A great part of the novel is devoted to an account of the lives and ideals of these two brothers, and also of their cousin Riḍwān, Yāsīn's son, who is first a Wafdist, and later on a Sa'dist. It is hardly surprising considering his father's immoral life and his unsettled upbringing that Riḍwān becomes a homosexual, and it is because of this that he is able to get a good job as private secretary to a minister In this way Maḥfūẓ associates corruption in the family with corruption in society. As in *al-Qāhira al-Jadīda*, Mahfuẓ presents the principal political and intellectual trends of Egyptian society through the conversations of his characters. 'Abd al-Mun'im, like Ma'mūn in *al-Qāhira al-Jadīda*, represents the attitude of the Muslim Brothers; Aḥmad, like 'Alī, represents the communist attitude, while Kamāl, like Mahjūb, has lost what beliefs he had. In addition, Kamāl's friend, Riyāḍ Qaldas, who is a Copt,[4] represents the Christian Egyptian viewpoint.

The novel ends when Amīna, the mother, is dying, and both Kamāl and Yāsīn are out shopping, the one for a black tie for mouring

(1) *al-Sukkariya*, p. 11.
(2) *Ibid.*, p. 11
(3) Vincent Monteil, *Anthologie Bilingue de la Littérature Arabe Contemporaine*, p. 205.
(4) Riyāḍ Qaldas perhaps reflects Najīb Mahfūz's friend 'Ādil Kāmil.

and the other for some clothes for his grandchild, about to be born.

The characters of the *Trilogy* are so many that it would be too much to analyse them all; therefore a brief discussion of the characters of 'Abd al-Jawād, Yāsīn, and Kamāl only will be given.

'Abd al-Jawād, the father, is a character of three different lives. He is a religious person who fulfils all the religious duties; "his conscience is clear, his heart full of love towards people, his soul rich in manly virtues and courage to aid others (*najda*)."[1] He takes his sons regularly to the Mosque on Fridays to perform the prayer, and there he listens attentively to the preacher, and prays silently and with humility; yet he prays only for God's mercy and forgiveness. He does not regret his sins, nor repent for them, and "even if he did repent, he would do so only with his tongue, not with his heart."[2] When he is reproached by Shaikh 'Abd al-Ṣamad, the dervish, he says that he loves and obeys God '"both in word and in deed, by praying, fasting and alms-giving, by remembering Him whether I am standing or sitting, and it does not matter after that if I amuse myself with pleasures which neither harm anyone nor cause me to neglect any duty. Has anything been forbidden except for either this or that reason?"

'"What a defence for what is wrong!" (comments the Shaikh.)

'"God is forgiving and merciful, Shaikh 'Abd al-Samad. I cannot conceive Him — may He be exalted and glorified — angry or frowning, even His revenge is hidden mercy. I offer Him love, obedience and piety. A good deed is rewarded tenfold."'[3]

His second and secret life begins at night, which he spends drinking with his friends, or visiting one of his mistresses. In this company he is always happy and good-humoured, and he is a favourite among the dancing girls who come to entertain him and his friends. This life is affected, however, by time. While in the first novel 'Abd al-Jawād is very successful in his relationships with women, in the second novel he has to spend extravagantly to retain Zannūba's friendship. Even so, Zannūba insists that he should either marry her or end their rela-

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(1) *Bain al-Qaṣrain*, p. 40

(2) *Ibid*, p. 364.

(3) *Ibid*, pp, 40-41.

tionship, and eventually he has to stop visiting her. When 'Abd al-Jawād finds out about Yāsīn's marriage to Zannūba, he is shocked and upset, but unable to make him divorce her, as he had done in the case of Yāsīn's first wife. Towards the end of the second novel 'Abd al-Jawād collapses when on the point of going to bed with one of his mistresses, and is carried home by his friends. Old age thus forces him to abandon this way of living.

Among his family, however, 'Abd al-Jawād leads a third life, in which he is the embodiment of tyranny, sternness and dictatorship. Every member of the family is intimidated by him, and is in agony when he or she is in his presence Every incident of the work demonstrates this, but it is enough to quote as an example this scene in which the sons have their breakfast with their father. 'These sessions, though short, were very trying for them, for they had to maintain a military politeness; they were oppressed by a fear which increased their sensitivity, and made them liable to commit mistakes because of their intense concentration on avoiding them Besides, breakfast itself took place in an atmosphere which spoilt their pleasure and enjoyment of it It was not unusual that al-Sayyid spent the short period which preceded the entrance of the mother with the tray of food, in examining his sons with a critical eye, until he found a fault, however trivial, in the appearance of one of them, or a spot on his clothes, when he would rain down upon him rebukes and abuse. He would sometimes ask Kamāl harshly, "Have you washed your hands?" If he answered in the affirmative he would order him: "Show them to me!" The boy would spread his hands swallowing in fear. The father instead of giving him encouragement for his cleanliness, would threaten him, "If you ever forget to wash them before eating, I will cut them off and save you the trouble of them." He would ask Fahmī "Does the son of a dog study his lessons or not?" When Fahmī answered yes, the father would comment with displeasure, "Politeness is better than knowledge," and would then look at Kamāl and go on sharply. "Do you hear, you son of a dog?" The mother would come in carrying the big tray of food and put it on the cloth, and would return to the wall, near a table on which a jug of water was placed. She stood ready to obey any gesture. The sons would wait until their father muttered, "Eat," and their hands would reach out for the bread according to their ages:

Yāsin, Fahmī then Kamāl. While they ate each of them would be thinking of the stern remarks and cruel looks to which he might be subjected. Kamāl was the most uneasy because he was the most afraid of his father. If the worst to which one of his brothers would be exposed was reprimands and rebukes, he himself would be subjected to kicks anp punches at the very least. He would therefore eat cautiously and uncomfortably, stealing a glance now and then at the remaining food which was quickly diminishing.'[1]

Yet breakfast was supposed to be a privilege for the sons. The mother, as we have seen, had to wait on them, while the two daughters were not allowed to breakfast with their father at all. Nevertheless, 'Abd al-Jawād loves his family, and if he is cruel to them, it is because he thinks that this is the right way to bring them up. Therefore when he hears that one of them has done wrong, he wonders how it is possible when he has taken such trouble to bring them up strictly.

Among his friends he is known for his generosity, humour, good-nature and patriotism, though he is patriotic only as long as all his sons are safe and none of them takes an active part in dangerous political activities. He supports the Wafd party financially and morally, but he would not allow any of his sons to join in a demonstration. Fahmī, however, disobeys his father, and is killed in one of the demonstrations of 1919.

As a result of this sudden death, 'Abd al-Jawād becomes less severe towards his family in the second part of the *Trilogy*, and when we reach the third part, *al-Sukkariya*, we notice that time and old age have weakened his position in the family, and he, as well as his friends, often look back regretfully to the good old days. Once on his way to meet his friends in the mosque, he passes his shop, which he had sold when he became too old to manage it, and he remembers how it had been the centre of all his activities: "You may console yourself and say, we have married off the daughters, brought up the sons, and seen the grandchildren. We have plenty of money which will last us until we die, and we have experienced the pleasures of this world for years, yes indeed, for years. Now it is time to thank God, and thanks are due to

(1) *Bain al-Qaṣrain*, pp. 19-20.

God always and ever. But oh, the longing (for the past). May God forgive time, time whose mere existence — that existence which does not cease for a moment — is a betrayal, and what a betrayal, to man. If stones could speak, I would ask these places to tell me about the past, to tell me whether it was true that this body could destroy mountains, that this sick heart never ceased throbbing, this mouth never stopped laughing, these senses did not know pain, and this image (of mine) was in every heart. Once again, may God forgive time!"(1)

Indeed, the reader is made to feel the effect of time throughout the *Trilogy*, especially in the last novel, *al-Sukkarīya*, in which the young men, who have enjoyed their youth tremendously, become old and afflicted with illness

In Yāsīn, 'Abd al-Jawād's eldest son by his first wife, the effect of heredity and environment is demonstrated. When his mother deserts 'Abd al-Jawād because she cannot bear his tyranny, Yāsīn lives with her away from the harshness of his father. His mother begins to lead a life of immorality; she marries and is divorced several times, and even sends the young Yāsīn to bring the greengrocer to visit her at night. Once Yāsīn sees her in bed with the greengrocer, and is so horrified that he runs away to his father's house. Yāsīn then is the son of a father who spends his nights with mistresses, and a mother who is a woman of no principles. Not only this, but he suffers at first from too much kindness and a lack of discipline, and later when he returns to his father, from too much restraint and a lack of affection, in spite of the fact that his stepmother Amīna and his half-brothers and sisters all love him

As Yāsīn gets older, he begins to spend most of his time with prostitutes and mistresses, and later, like his mother, is married and divorced more than once. Before the force of lust, all his principles give way. Both his first marriage and the subsequent divorce take place because of the scandals which result from his being caught with a servant. In a very amusing chapter he goes to ask for the hand of his second wife, Maryam, and when he finds her mother alone, he loses no time in taking her to bed with him. Nevertheless the marriage with

(1) *al-Sukkarīya*, pp. 134-135.

her daughter takes place as arranged. This marriage comes to an end when he brings Zannūba to his house to spend the night with him, and his wife, Maryam, leaves him. He then marries Zannūba although he knows that she has been his father's mistress. Yāsīn's son, Riḍwān, brought up under such conditions, "prostitutes" himself to powerful men.

When the reader considers the important events in Yāsīn's life, his character as a whole seems a little unconvincing, yet Maḥfūẓ's skill in presenting these events distracts the reader's attention from the improbabilities. Yāsīn's lively sense of humour makes him seem plausible and likeable, and his defects can be attributed to the influence of his disturbed childhood. He is good-natured, and despite his faults, is very attached to his family. In all the misfortunes which befall them, he is sincere in his sympathy towards them. Even when he has to leave the family house after the quarrel with his stepmother about his marriage to Maryam, he says to Kamāl, "I am not angry I shall leave the house with the deepest sorrow, regretting my separation from its inhabitants, most of all from mother. Do not worry, everything will resume its normal course in a short while. There is no black heart in this family, and your mother's heart is the whitest."(1)

Kamāl, the youngest son, is a far more intellectual and sophisticated character, perhaps the most complex character to be found in Arabic fiction. He is also the first character in all Maḥfūẓ's works who can be identified in any way with the author himself.

As a child he has a burning desire to listen to tales and to invent them. He gains some satisfaction from his brother Yāsīn, who from time to time, annoyed by Kamāl's persistent requests, tells him the stories of some of the novels he is reading. Kamāl envies Yāsīn for being able to read, for having "the key to the world of magic".(2) He feels miserable when he holds a novel in his hands and turns over its pages, without being able to decipher it.

At the beginning of the second part of the work however, when Kamāl is in his late teens, he sees Yāsīn as a "superficial reader", whose

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(1) *Qaṣr al-Shauq*, p 113

(2) *Bain al-Qaṣrain*, p 48.

reading is inadequate both in quantity and in quality. He has acquired a great respect for knowledge and culture from his reading of Western books, and insists on joining the High School for Teachers in order to learn "the origin of life and its fate" and to study "history, languages, ethics and poetry",[1] despite the opposition of his father who despises teachers, thinks that the pursuit of knowledge is valueless and wishes his son to have a respectable position such as that of a judge or an officer in the army.

Just as Ikhnaton in *Malik min Shu'ā'* reflects 'Ādil Kāmil,[2] Kamāl reflects Mahfūẓ during the period of his life in which he fell a prey to extreme pessimism and doubt. This attitude had various causes, among them Kamāl's shock as a child when he finds that the head of al-Husain, whom he loved and venerated, is not to be found in al-Ḥusain's mosque as he had always believed, and later on his loss of faith in his father when he hears that, in spite of his extreme severity in the home, he spends the night drinking wine and amusing himself with his mistresses. The most important factor, however, is his disappointment in love. Kamāl falls in love with 'Āida Shaddād, a girl from an upper class family. His love for her is deep and intense, he idealizes her to such an extent that he always refers to her as his idol (*ma'būda*) and is horrified and disgusted to think that she is an ordinary woman to whom her husband will make love.[3] He is profoundly shocked and disillusioned when he realises that she was using him merely to attract the attention of Hasan Salīm, also from an aristocratic family, who soon becomes her husband. 'Āida's engagement is announced while Kamāl is sitting with his friends, among whom is Ḥasan Salīm, who has reminded Kamāl once that his low birth makes it impossible for him to hope for any relationship with 'Āida. When Kamāl hears the announcement, "he stole a glance at Hasan Salīm in spite of himself, and saw that he was calm and composed. He had been afraid that he would find him arrogant or gloating — how could he think so? — and he felt some fleeting satisfaction. He began to beg his soul for all the strength it possessed so that he could hide his bleeding wound from

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(1) *Qaṣr al-Shauq*, p. 52.
(2) See above pp. 81-82.
(3) *Qaṣr al-Shauq*, p 304.

watchful eyes, and avert any opportunity for contempt or derision. Take heart, my soul; and I promise you that we shall return to all this later on, that we shall suffer together until we perish, and that we shall ponder about everything until we become mad. How enjoyable will be this time in the stillness of the night when there are no eyes to see and no ears to hear, when pain and delirium and tears are permissible, without the derision or reproach of anyone!"(1)

Kamāl's disappointment in love, and his wide reading of Western philosophy gradually lead him to lose belief in any values. During the argument he has with his father about his article on Darwin,(2) he recalls the bitter conflict between religious beliefs and scientific theories which used to torment him, and how after long sleepless nights, his faith in religion began to die. He becomes a materialist; he drinks wine and visits brothels. He loses his previous enthusiasm for politics and national affairs. He examines and re-examines every traditionally accepted point of view, and analyses every situation in which he finds himself. Even when his father is dying, he examines the nature of his last minutes alive, then "feels ashamed of himself for wishing to analyse and study the situation for some moments, as if it were permissible that his father's death should be food for his contemplation and material for his knowledge."(3)

At the end of *al-Sukkariya*, however, there is an indication of a change in Kamāl's attitude. In a discussion with Riyāḍ, Kamāl talks about the views of his nephews Aḥmad and ʿAbd al-Munʿim who, although the former is a communist and the latter a Muslim Brother, both agree that one must have a belief in life. Kamāl tells Riyāḍ that he attributes his present misery to his loss of belief. When he is alone, we find him meditating on Aḥmad's statement: "I believe in life and people. I find myself obliged to follow their ideals as long as I believe that they are true, for to shrink from this is cowardice and escapism, just as I find myself obliged to revolt against their ideals when I believe that they are false; for to shrink from this is treachery. This is the meaning of eternal revolution." Kamāl then asks himself,

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(1) *Qaṣr al-Shauq*, p. 247
(2) *Ibid*, chapter 33.
(3) *al-Sukkariya*, p. 212.

"You might ask what is true and what is false; but perhaps doubt is a kind of escapism, like mysticism and a passive belief in knowledge. Can you too manage to be an ideal teacher, an ideal husband and an eternal revolutionary?"(1)

In these last paragraphs the reader feels that Kamāl has perhaps at last found some meaning in life.

Although Kamāl is the character who can be identified most closely with Maḥfūẓ, the author's views about art in general are expressed by Kamāl's friend Riyāḍ, and occasionally by his nephew Ahmad Shaukat. For example, Kamāl says to Riyāḍ, " But your efforts are wasted in writing novels. Sometimes I wonder what you have gained from science".

The latter replies enthusiastically, "For (application to) art, I took from science the worship of truth, fidelity to it, (the ability to) confront it with courage, however bitter it might be, impartiality in judgement, and complete tolerance towards created beings . "(2)

Trevor Le Gassick writes of Maḥfūẓ · "The basic problems with which his novels are essentially concerned are common to all humanity — life and death, youth and age, the relationships between parents and children and husband and wife, nationalism versus internationalism, communism versus capitalism, religion versus materialism, and the ever present problems of time and its influence upon every aspect of our lives .."(3) This can be seen most clearly in the *Trilogy*, a work which will stand out as a landmark, not only in the literary history of the Arab world, but also in the study of twentieth century Egyptian social history. Here is what J. Jomier has to say about the *Trilogy*: "Pour en revenir à l'auteur, disons seulement qu'en 1947 M Naguib Mahfuz avait prouvé dans son *Zoqaq al-Madaqq*, qu'il possédait un sens aigu des situations comiques. Il montre aujourd' hui qu'il est capable d'aborder avec maitrise d'autres thèmes plus vastes et plus complexes. L'oeuvre qu'il vient de réaliser marquera une date dans

(1) *al-Sukkarīya*; pp 312-316.

(2) *Ibid.*, p 142

(3) Le Gassick, *Najib Mahfouz's Trilogy, Middle East Forum*, February, 1963, p 33

l'histoire de la littérature arabe, elle mériterait d'être connue à l'étranger."(1)

To demonstrate the Arab opinion of this work, we shall quote Ṭāhā Ḥusain's comments on *Bain al-Qaṣrain*, in which he congratulates Najīb Maḥfūz "... because he enabled the novel to attain a perfection and beauty, a profundity and precision, and an almost magical impact with which no Egyptian writer before him had invested it. I do not doubt that this novel sustains comparison with any of the international novels in any language of the world."(2)

The third phase of Mahfūz's novels, the characteristics of which will be outlined briefly here, begins with *Aulād Ḥāratinā* (*The Children of our Quarter*) which appeared as a serial in *al-Ahrām* in 1959, and has not yet been published in book form in Egypt It was followed by *al-Liṣṣ wa 'l-Kilāb* (*The Thief and the Dogs*, 1961), *al-Summān wa 'l-Kharīf* (*Quail and the Autumn*, 1962), *al-Tarīq* (*The Path*, 1964), *al-Shahhādh* (*The Beggar*, 1965), *Tharthara fauq al-Nīl* (*Chatter on the Nile*, 1966) and *Mīrāmār* (1967 — the title is the name of a small hotel).

This last phase of Mahfūz's work might be called that of the "novel of ideas", as compared with the second phase, that of "the novel of life". Whereas Mahfūẓ's works during the second phase are based on "life", that is, the author's main concern is to depict life and to discover its trends and whatever messages it may contain, the motive which lies behind the writing of each of the later novels is the desire to express certain ideas. The later novels then depict "life" only in so far as it is necessary to clarify the idea which each novel aims at treating.

This change in technique gives the last novels certain characteristics, among which is that, generally speaking, they centre on one main character to which the other characters are subordinate. In a novel like *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*, for instance, there are at least ten characters who are drawn in the round, whereas in *al-Liṣṣ wa 'l-Kilāb*, the hero, Sa'īd Mahrān, is all important, while the other people in the novel—some of

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(1) Jomier, *Trois Romans de M Naguib Mahfuz*, *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales*, No 4, 1957, p 30.

(2) Husain, *Min Adabinā al-Mu'āṣir*, p. 80.

them are even nameless—serve only to throw light on his character.

A second feature of this phase is that Mahfūz neglects all detail and tackles immediately the novel's main theme. The reader finds himself face to face with the crisis from the first page. The first few lines of *al-Liss wa 'l-Kilāb*, for instance, outline the hero's problem. "Again he breathes the air of freedom Waiting for him were his blue suit and his rubber shoes, and apart from that he found nobody There recedes (behind him) the massive door of the prison closed upon desperate secrets He had lost much, even four precious years, because of his betrayal, and soon he will stand before them all, challenging It is time for anger to break out and burn, and for betrayers to despair unto death, and for betrayal to atone for its misshapen face. Nabawiya 'Ilish How could the two names have become one You may be watching cautiously. I will not fall into the trap, but I will pounce at the right time like fate"

Another important feature which distinguishes Mahfūz's later works is the use of the technique of "the stream of consciousness" and the resulting drastic change which marks Mahfūz's style, which becomes almost poetic. Mahfūz's previous style was seldom connotative or symbolic, but, in the main, calm, detached and sedate He once said that before the revolution he was describing a static society, but when the society changed to "a swiftly moving one", he felt obliged to adopt a form which would move as swiftly (1) Mahfūz achieves this by various means, among which is the use of the "stream of consciousness" technique. The later novels often convey directly what is passing in the hero's mind, and so the language is stongly coloured by his changes of mood. In the earlier phase this variety is lacking, since the author relates everything objectively, and in a uniform tone, however the first indications of the new technique can be seen in cases where the author introduces a character's thoughts by such phrases as "He began to wonder", and then leaves the character to think aloud, so that the reader is presented with something like an inner monologue.

The use of this technique is perfected in the novels of the later

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(1) Ghālī Shukrī, *Najīb Mahfūz Yatahaddathu 'an Fannihi al-Riwā'ī*, *Hiwār*, No 3, 1963, p 68

phase, as can be seen, for example, in this passage from *al-Liṣṣ wa 'l-Kilāb* Sa'id Mahrān, having expressed his intention to take revenge on his wife Nabawiya and his apprentice 'Ilish, continues "And Sanā' (his daughter) When she flashes through the mind, heat, dust, hatred, murk vanish, and longing arises in my soul like cleanness after rain. What does the little one know about her father? Nothing, just like the street, the passers-by, the sweltering weather Will fortune grant us a happy place where we may love each other when betrayal is a past, hateful memory? Make use of all the cunning that you possess Your blow must be as strong as your long patience behind bars. There has come to you a man who darts in the water like a fish, flies in the air like a hawk, climbs walls like a rat, goes through doors like a bullet I wonder How will he face you? How will our eyes meet? Have you forgotten, 'Ilish, how you fawned on me like a dog When you finish going through this street with its frowning arcade, the street of dated distractions which ascends without loftiness My footsteps from time to time over a hole lying in wait in the pavement The clattering of the tram wheel is like an imprecation I bear witness that I hate you"[1]

We are brought face to face with the character's thoughts, thoughts which move from one point to another abruptly The language is intense, swift and expressive The character changes from the first to the second, and sometimes even to the third person in referring to himself, and the style is clearly coloured by his emotions Here when Sa'id remembers his daughter, such words as anger, explosion, death, despair, etc , yield to words like longing, cleanness after rain, love, pleasure, and so on, and no sooner does the word betrayal come to his mind than the style is again tense and bitter

With his admirable ability to create a wide range of characters and to portray a tremendous variety of situations, his extensive knowledge of literary techniques, and his capacity for welding together the universal and the particular, and for dealing with fundamental human issues, Mahfūz is undoubtedly superior as a novelist to the other writers whose works have been discussed above, and indeed is

(1) *Al-Liṣṣ wa 'l-Kilab*, pp 8-9

justly considered by many to be the greatest novelist in the Arab world.

The realistic trend, then, began in the nineteen thirties with the works of Ḥakīm, and expanded in the nineteen forties as it attracted writers like 'Ādil Kāmil, Mahfūẓ, Saḥḥār, Taimūr and Ṭāhā Husain, whose first novels had been historical or romantic, and who now turned to the realistic novel as the most suitable medium for expressing their views on the serious problems of life. By the end of the period covered by this study, this trend had become the dominant one, the foremost place in it being occupied by the works of Najīb Mahfūz.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the Egyptian public were introduced to the genre of the novel through the many translations of Western novels made in late 19th and early 20th centuries. The first Egyptian novel, in the true sense of the word, appeared in 1913 when Haikal first published *Zainab*; however, it was not until 1929, with the second publication of *Zainab*, that the novel really began its development. By the early nineteen thirties Māzinī's *Ibrāhim al-Kātib*, Ḥakīm's *'Audat al-Rūḥ* and Abū Hadīd's *Ibnat al-Mamlūk* had already appeared, and these works heralded the three main trends which the Egyptian novel followed in the course of its development. the romantic, the realistic and the historical.

During the ten years from 1939 to 1949 many important novels were written, for example Taimūr's *Salwā fi Mahabb al-Rīh*, Ṭāhā Ḥusain's *Du'ā' al-Karawān*, Ḥakīm's *al-Ribāt al-Muqaddas*, Abū Ḥadīd's *Zinūbiyā* and Mahfūẓ's *Khān al-Khalili*, *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*, and *Bidāya wa Nihāya*. In an article entitled *al-Ittijāhāt al-Ḥaditha fi 'l-Adab al-'Arabī*, 'Aqqād notices this increasing progress, and the growing scarcity of translated works in comparison with original works by Arab authors He gives as reasons for this the growth of self-confidence in the Arab nations and the emergence of a group of writers able to write on various subjects found thirty or forty years before only in translations. He felt however (mistakenly) that this progress might be only a temporary phase of development due to the conditions of war, among the results of which he mentions the scarcity of imported books and publications.(1)

This last factor was especially important for the publishing trade. Since no foreign works either original or translated were now available, publishing houses were obliged to urge authors to write books, and new publishing houses had to be established to supply the steadily increasing reading public with material. It was this which enabled

(1) 'Aqqād, *al-Ittijāhāt al-Ḥaditha*, *al-Risāla*, Feb. 12th, 1945, pp 137-9.

Najīb Maḥfūẓ and other young writers to find publishers for their first works, as has been mentioned above.

The romantic trend, although the first to appear, was slow to become established. However, it is to be remarked that the first romantic works such as *Zainab*, *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib*, and *Du'ā' al-Karawān* are probably the best to have been written in the period covered by this study. Although the trend became well established in the late nineteen forties when Muhammad 'Abdallāh and Yūsuf al-Sibā'ī began to publish their novels, none of these later works reached the same standard.

An examination of the romantic works discussed in this study shows that they share certain characteristics which are peculiar to romantic works in general, such as the improbability of events and situations, the stress on the emotional side of human feelings, and the idealization of characters. It is also to be noted that most of these works emphasize that the individual should be free from the pressure of society, and show the need for social reform in Egypt. Two exceptions to this are *Nidā' al-Majhūl* by Taimūr, who was apparently attempting to produce a work of a universal quality, and *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib* by Māzinī, who perhaps was influenced in writing his novel by the principles of the Dīwān School which condemned the use of political and social themes in poetry.

Haikal in particular was successful from the artistic point of view in expressing his call for the emancipation of women in the form of situations and characters, and indeed these are far more lifelike than those of later romantic novels. Sibā'ī forty years later failed to choose suitable characters and situations to express a similar theme as we have seen, and the same can be said of Ṭāhā Ḥusain when he attempted to draw attention to the crimes committed in the name of honour.

With regard to characterization, it is striking that in all these novels there are only two characters who, in spite of their faults, remain in the reader's mind as complete personalities: Ḥāmid in *Zainab*, and Ibrāhīm in *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib*. This may be because the authors are in effect writing about themselves. Āmina in Ṭāhā Ḥusain's *Du'ā' al-Karawān* might have been mentioned with these two had she not

been so improbable. The other main characters seem superficial in comparison and are frequently unconvincing. As for the secondary characters, the most entertaining are those of Māzinī's *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib* and to a lesser extent those of Taimūr's *Nidā' al-Majhūl*. This may be accounted for by the fact that both these authors are good short story writers and therefore practised in producing such quick character sketches.

The work of the romantic writers, especially Sibā'ī and 'Abd al-Quddūs has clearly been affected by the revolution. Their early works were purely love stories, but from the middle fifties both authors have tended to include comment on political issues in addition to the basic love story.

The historical trend has followed a different course from that of the romantic. As we have seen, although *Ibnat al-Mamlūk* is considered a great advance on Zaidān's works, it is far inferior to the novels produced later by Abū Ḥadīd and by other historical novelists. This does not mean to say that each historical novel was better than the one before, but that the majority of good historical novels were produced towards the end of our period.

During the course of development of this trend, both Pharaonic and Arabic themes were tackled, and at the same time authors sometimes made use of these themes to convey their views on contemporary problems. Before the end of the Second World War, novels dealing with Pharaonic themes began to diminish, as their authors abandoned the writing of historical novels for other genres. Moreover, the increasing enthusiasm for Arab nationalism, an indication of which was the foundation of the Arab League, may have played a part in the lack of interest in Pharaonic history.

Some authors, for example Abū Ḥadīd and 'Ādil Kāmil, were principally concerned with psychological analysis, and consequently produced profound and complex characters in *al-Wi'ā' al-Marmarī* and *Malik min Shu'ā'*. This last novel centers on the life of Ikhnaton, which is historically controversial, and in its first half reveals psychological problems which the author himself seems to have experienced. In this respect, the character of Ikhnaton approaches that of Kamāl

'Abd al-Jawād in the *Trilogy*, who passes through a similar crisis. Other historical novelists devote greater space in their works to the description of historical events. Najīb Maḥfūẓ however, particularly in *Kifāḥ Tība*, manages to find a balance between psychological and historical elements.

Although the historical trend in general flourished until Abū Ḥadīd's best historical novel, *al-Wi'ā' al-Marmarī*, was published in 1951, it began to decline after the revolution. Even its most prominent representative, Abū Ḥadīd, abandoned it, and in 1954 published his only realistic novel, *Anā 'l-Sha'b* (*I Am the People*) in which he criticizes social and political conditions before the revolution. Among the few post-revolutionary historical novels worth mentioning are Bākathīr's *Sīrat Shujā'* (*The Biography of a Brave Man*) in which he describes the life and achievements of Salāh al-Dīn, and 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Saḥḥār's *Qal'at al-Abṭāl* (*The Fortress of Heroes*) which is about the 'Urābī revolution.

The realistic trend was destined to be the greatest of all three trends. It started remarkably well with Ḥakīm's *'Audat al-Rūḥ*, and quickly attracted the interest of many authors, even those who had begun their careers as novelists by writing romantic or historical novels, such as Ṭāhā Ḥusain, 'Ādil Kāmil and Najīb Maḥfūẓ. As one might expect, most writers of realistic novels attempted to depict contemporary society and to criticize its defects. They varied however in their attitude towards criticism. Whereas Ṭāhā Ḥusain and Ḥakīm criticize only certain phenomena—for instance superstition in *'Audat al-Rūḥ*, the application of the Code Napoléon to the illiterate peasants in *Yaumiyāt Nā'ib fī 'l-Aryāf*, or a man's lack of freedom in choosing his wife in *Shajarat al-Bu's*, Najīb Maḥfūẓ on the other hand is concerned with a deeper and more exhaustive criticism of society as a whole in such a manner as to suggest that the only remedy for its defects is a complete revolution in the structure of society as it now exists. His friend 'Ādil Kāmil advocates the same solution but in a much less artistic way. Again other writers such as 'Aqqād and Taimūr avoid social criticism altogether.

The realistic novels, especially those of Najīb Maḥfūẓ, abound in complex and varied characters which are very well drawn. Indeed,

Maḥfūẓ's characters set him apart from other realistic novelists in our period. His eagerness to depict numbers of varied characters, however, sometimes results in the lack of a sufficiently strong link to connect them all in one novel, as in *Zuqāq al-Midaqq* in particular. Here we perhaps have the closest Egyptian work to the novel of characters as described by Muir.(1) Later, Maḥfūẓ found a solution to the problem of linking many different characters in the use of the family tie, which is applied first in *Bidāya wa Nihāya* and then on a larger scale in the *Trilogy*.

It was in realistic works that the Egyptian novel witnessed such important developments as the introduction of the "novel of generations" by Ṭāhā Ḥusain in *Shajarat al-Bu's*. He was followed by Saḥḥār in *Fī Qāfilat al-Zamān*, and later by Maḥfūẓ, who brought this form to perfection in his *Trilogy*. Another advance was the use of the stream of conciousness, the first signs of which appeared in 'Ādil Kāmil's *Malik min Shu'ā'* as already mentioned, but again it was Maḥfūẓ who mastered this technique in the *Trilogy*. The technique of the stream of conciousness is now frequently used by other writers, especially by the short story writers of the younger generation

At the present time the realistic trend is still dominant even though few good novels have been written in recent years. There has been a marked change in the works of Najīb Maḥfūẓ. His main themes are no longer the lives of the lower classes, but universal human problems. Although his technique has also altered in many ways, his works have never ceased to be realistic. Taimūr has written several realistic novels which show the effect of the revolution in their concern with social and political ideas, instead of human themes as before. Some socialist writers have also begun to contribute to the realistic trend, the most important of whom is 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī, whose novel *al-Arḍ* (*The Earth*, 1954) was translated into English in 1962. Another recent realistic novel which has been translated into English is Fatḥī Ghānim's *al-Rajul Alladhī Faqada Ẓillahu* (*The Man Who Lost His Shadow*).

As is clear from the works discussed in this study, the setting, the

(1) E. Muir, *The Structure of the Novel*, chapter I.

subject matter, and the characters in Egyptian novels are usually Egyptian or Arab, but the techniques used by novelists are European. So far no Egyptian writer has been able to create a new form of novel; they have all modelled their works on those of European authors. However, the Egyptian novel is still young, having existed a mere fifty years or so, and if this is born in mind, one will certainly appreciate the efforts of Egyptian writers and their achievements. It is not impossible that in the future an original and distinctively Egyptian technique of novel writing may be evolved.

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